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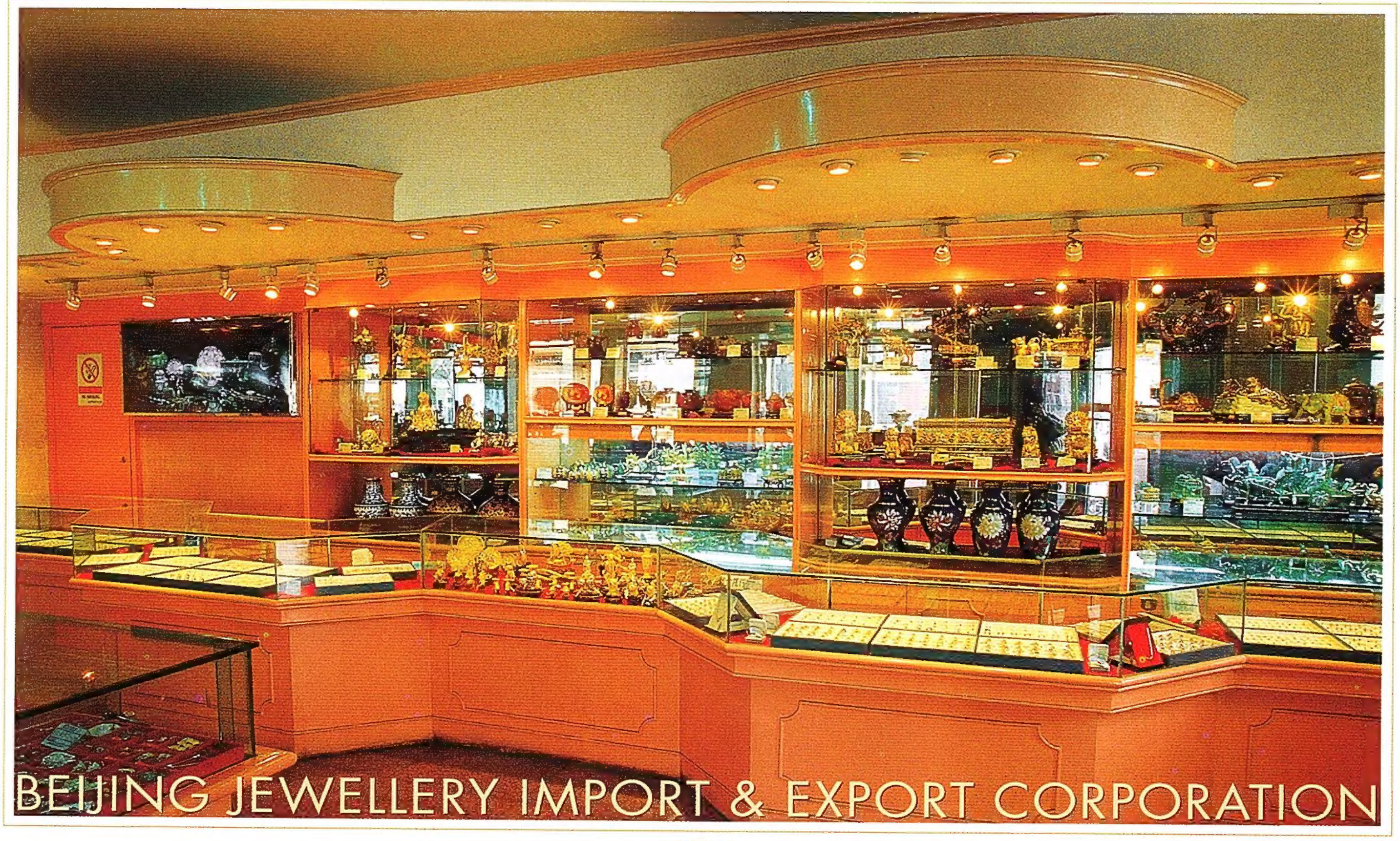

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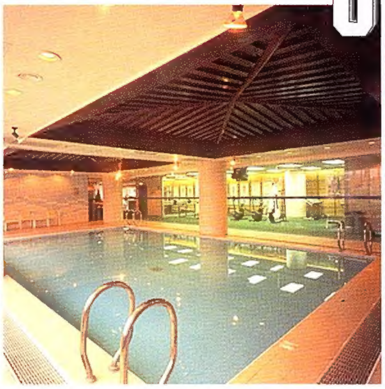

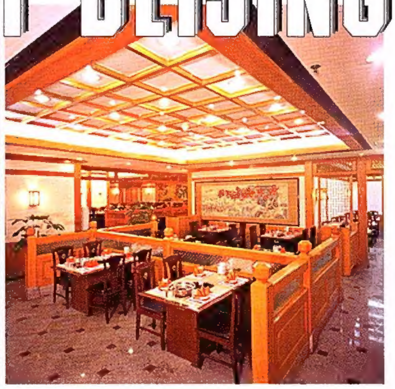

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China
CHINA TOURISM

CONTENTS

No. 218 September 1998

FEATURES

18 Survey of 10 Most Favoured Chinese/Foreign Tourist Cities

The results of the survey are out! Check to see whether your favourite is on the list. We have also invited travellers Rebecca Lee, Lun Wenbiao, Jian Peifa and Zhong Zhengqin to talk about their choices.

22 The Great Wall: Adding to Nature's Formidability

The Great Wall Through a Camera's Eye
Photos & article by Zhai Dongfeng

A Great Wall Tour in Northern Shaanxi
Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

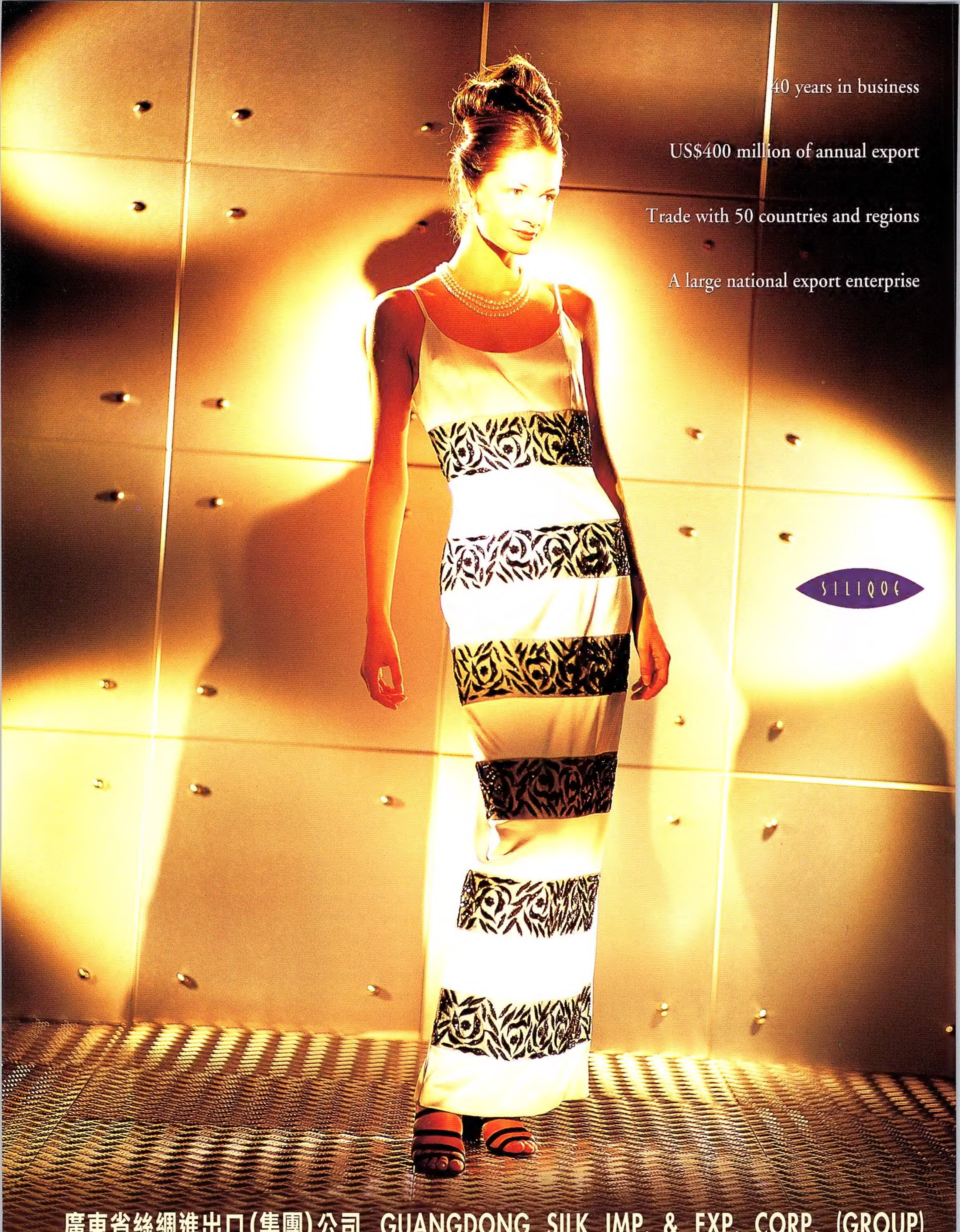
Ten Years on the 6000-Kilometre Great Wall
Photos & article by Zheng Boqing

One of the seven wonders of the world, the Great Wall is a must for tourists visiting China. In fact, nowadays, most tourists feel that the well-preserved Ming-dynasty sections of the Great Wall are the most thrilling to visit. The Great Wall in Northern Shaanxi, however, has fallen into ruins, and is linked more with the daily life of local folks than tourists. Also, a couple who spent 10 years walking along the Great Wall present their story.

58 A Wildlife Park: Mixing People and Animals

Photos & article by Zhai Dongfeng

The wildlife park in Qinhuangdao is a paradise for you to meet the animals up close. Inside the park, you can see lions, elephants, cranes, pelicans, dolphins and many others, feed the deer, gazelles, horses and camels, and have the most thrilling experience of your life: being in a jeep surrounded by several bears in the beast-of-prey region...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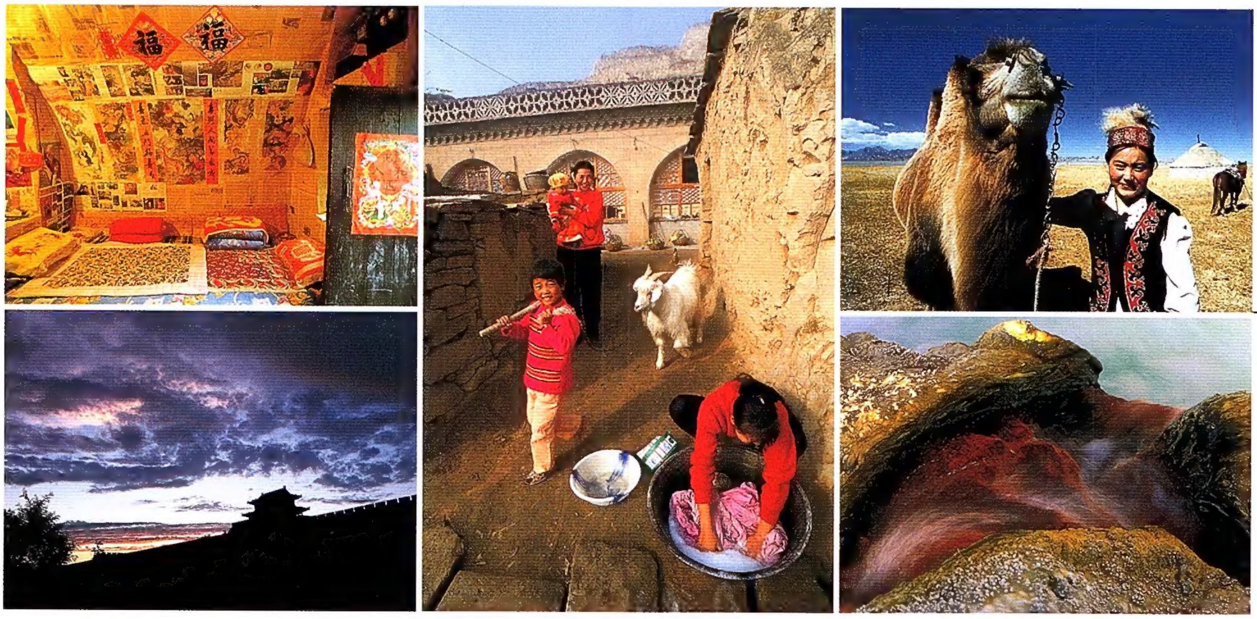
CONTENTS

No. 218 September 1998



66 **Looking for the 'Bleeding River'**
Photos & article by Zhao Cheng'an

70 **The Blossoming Dounan Village**
Photos by Li Zhixiong Article by Li Xu

Dounan Village in Kunming is a famous "Flower Village" in South China. Here, flowers have not only adorned the village with colours and fragance, but have also become an indispensable part of the villagers' lives.

78 **Kunming World Gardening Expo '99**
Compiled by Xiaobai

79 **Mandarin Duck Rotatable Pot — A Rare Piece Among Wine Vessels**
Photos by Wang Yaojin Article by Song Quanzhong

80 **Aksay — Home of the Kazaks**
Photos & article by Li Kesheng

DEPARTMENTS

11 **From The Editor**

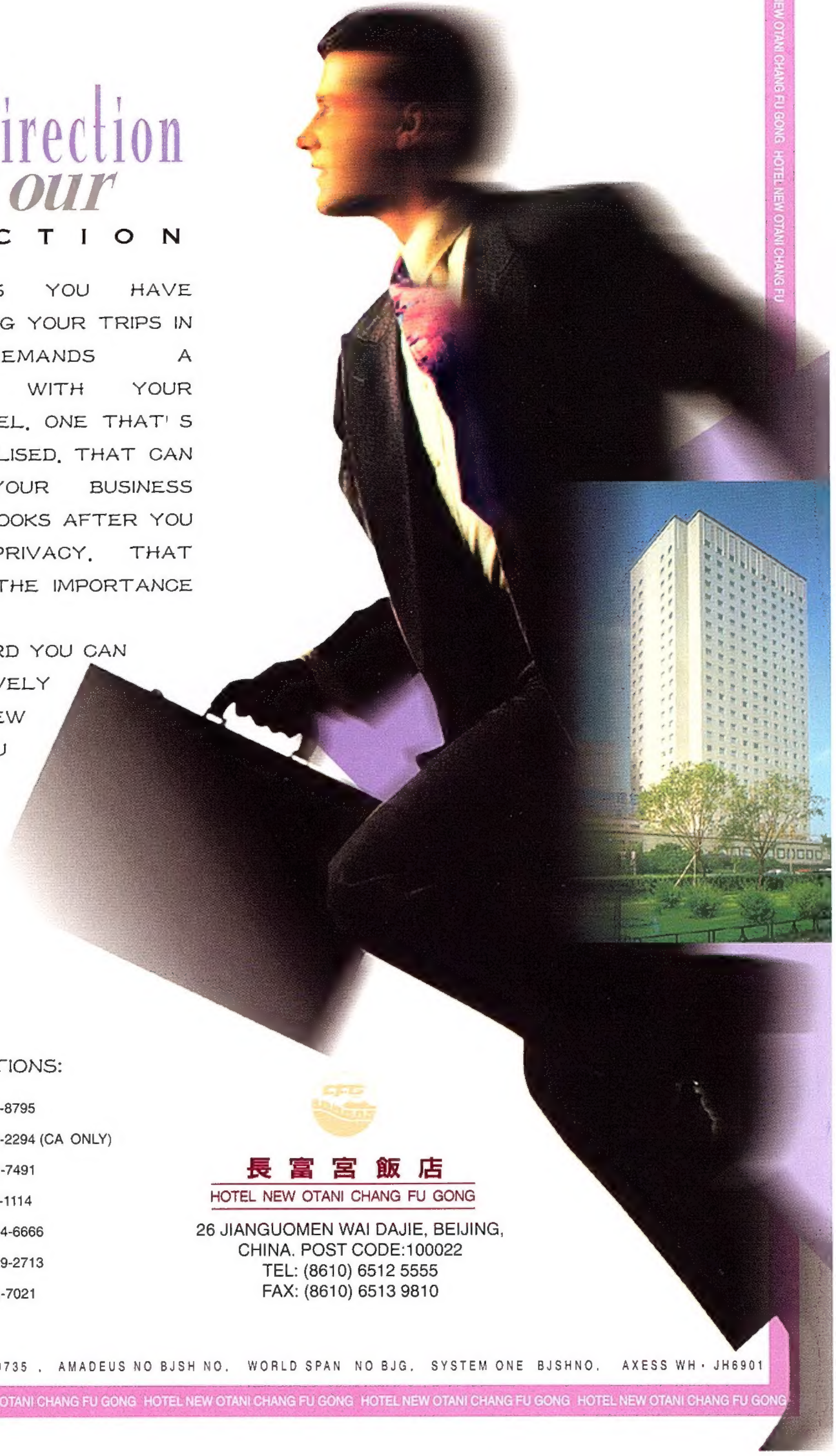
12 **Travel Journal**
The 'Steaming Feast' in Chengdu *Photo & article by He Ruifang*
The Vase of a Kiln Worker *Photo & article by Mu Ren*

14 **Face To Face**
An Excursion to Yumen Pass *Photos & article by Xie Guanghui*

15 **Update**

16 **Local Guide**
Xi'an: Tracking Its Imperial Antiquities *Article by Stone*

85 **Next Issue**



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FROM THE EDITOR

The Great Wall is definitely the pride of the Chinese nation. As one of the seven wonders of the world, it contains endless stories; as a touchable historical relic, it has attracted hundreds of thousands of tourists, and its mysterious legends have aroused everyone's imagination.

However, because of the tremendous length of the Great Wall, it is not an easy task to travel its entire distance. When editing our special feature on the Great Wall, we also faced a dilemma deciding what information to use and what to forsake. Finally we chose to include the following: the best preserved sections of the Ming-dynasty Great Wall in the outskirts of Beijing; the sections of the wall in northern Shaanxi Province, once prime military defence positions that have now fallen into ruins and are visited by few tourists; and the fascinating story of a couple of super fans of the Great Wall who spent 10 years travelling its entire length.

After grasping the silent history of the Great Wall in the suburbs of Beijing, you can enjoy the liveliness of the wildlife in the Qinhuangdao Wildlife Park nearby. It is a completely novel experience being "watched" by the animals in a wildlife park rather than watching them in a zoo. If you are not planning a trip to northern China this summer, you can visit the Flower Village in Yunnan Province instead. There, you can enjoy a romantic summer vacation and indulge in the fragrance and beauty of varied species of flowers.

We always cater to the desires of our readers. As China Tourism is celebrating its 18th anniversary of publication, we have made some alterations in the contents according to readers' demands, hoping to be more practical while still maintaining the publication's high quality. We would be grateful for your opinions.

The 'Steaming Feast' in Chengdu

Photo & article by He Ruifang

Those who love eating will find Chengdu in Sichuan Province a paradise; not only are the dishes there of a great variety, but they are also mouth-watering and will leave you savouring them endlessly.

Opposite Qingyanggong in the city centre of Chengdu, there is an extensive open area where food hawkers, and food-loves, gather. These mobile delicatessens sell varied snacks ranging from skewers, grilled chicken wings and quail, to boiled meatballs and lotus-root slices. The food is incredibly cheap — a real bargain at only 20 cents. Grilled quail is the most expensive of all, yet it costs only two yuan.

A small restaurant named "Mapo Tofu Diner" standing by the side of the road welcomes many customers. "Mapo Tofu" is a famous Sichuan dish said to be created by a poor scholar's wife who had a pockmarked face, hence her nickname "Mapo" (a woman with a pockmarked face). Once the scholar invited his friends to dine at his home, but all his clever wife had was minced meat. Having a quick wit, she cooked the meat together with tofu (bean curds) and seasoned it with chilli, soya sauce and spicy bean paste. She included bean curd because she could buy a large portion at a low price, thus the guests could eat their fill. However, to her surprise, the strong and spicy flavour of the dish won everyone's appreciation.

Whether this diner has any relationship with "Mapo" no-one really knows; all I know is that the dish "Mapo Tofu" prepared by the chef here is really delicious. In order to let customers try all the famous local Sichuan dishes at one sitting, the shop introduced a two-person set dinner in which more or less 20 dishes are served. The "Steaming Feast" is another recommendation of the restaurant. It is highly appreciated by customers who have tried it and costs just 25 yuan.

Many people may have the wrong idea that all Sichuan dishes are hot; in fact, there are both spicy and non-spicy dishes in Sichuan cuisine, and the burning sensation brought about by eating spicy Sichuan food is quite distinctive. Sometimes one may find one's tongue becoming numb gradually; this feeling is caused by prickly ash. The fiery sensation, however, is generated by chilli and peppercorn. Most people prefer a combination of the two since it is an exciting challenge for the palate.

The distinctive "Steaming Feast"

"Husband and wife beef slices" is an example of the kind of dish mentioned above. It was created by another poor couple around 50 years ago. In order to make a living, the couple came up with a new idea of using the innards of oxen in a cold dish. The couple started by boiling the entrails, followed by draining them, and finally sliced them thin. Gravy, sesame oil, prickly ash and chilli were added for seasoning. They made a profit very quickly so they started their first small restaurant in the Tidu Street West and named this dish "husband and wife beef slices". The cold and spicy beef will definitely satisfy the palate of those who love that fiery numbness.

Also included in the set dinner are "spicy loach" and other mildly hot dishes like "fried cucumbers with mushrooms", "Sichuan noodles with hot pepper sauce" and "Sichuan wontons with chilli oil". Dishes which are not spicy at all are "first-class tofu" made with peas and minced meat, "jellied chicken" made with tender chicken breast and "steamed beef".

The "Steaming Feast" is served as follows: all the guests have five steamers piled up in front of them. In the first steamer are buns stuffed with meat and vegetables. The filling inside the soft, white bread is very delicate and not at all oily because there are more vegetables than meat. In the second steamer are pork-stuffed dumplings which are large in size and very appetising. Found in the third steamer is another kind of steamed dumplings with meat stuffing. The following one is the "pearl dumplings", which are actually sticky glutinous rice balls. Finally comes the soup with meat and vegetables.

Guests can try not only vegetables, meat, and seafood in the feast, but also soup, dessert and the final dish — pickles. The turnip pickles, pink in colour and covered with chilli powder and herbs, are sour, spicy and crispy, and most importantly help digestion. This is the reason why pickles are served last in a Sichuan feast.

Translated by Jess Tang

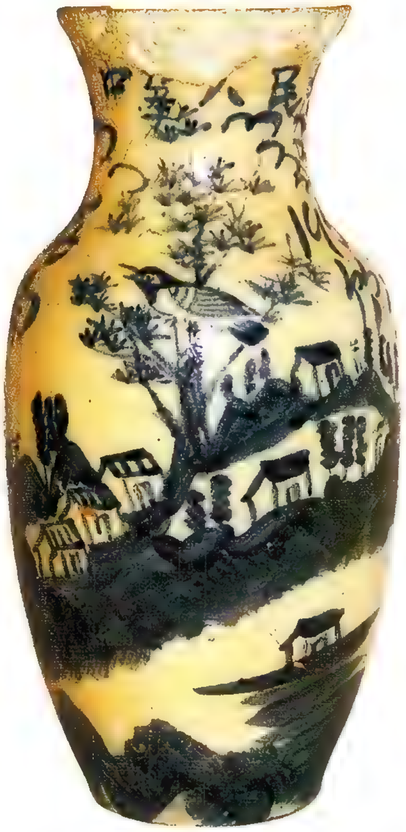
The Vase of a Kiln Worker

Photo & article by Mu Ren

All porcelain collectors know that, throughout the dynasties in China, there were government officers charged with administering the production of official porcelain ware, and each of these works of art was meticulously created irrespective of production cost and human resources. This is why the official kilns in China often produced a fine array of treasures drawing universal attention. For example, in the 1997 Hanhai Autumn Auction, a blue glazed vase with drawings of children, a masterpiece of official Qing-dynasty porcelain, was sold for an astonishing 2.64 million yuan!

More and more official porcelain ware produced in the Ming and Qing dynasties, mostly in typical blue and white colours, is being auctioned at high prices both inside and outside China, indicating the choice of large collectors, while folk-style porcelain has been largely ignored.

On one trip to the countryside, in a secluded village at the foot of the Loess Plateau, I walked up to an imposing dwelling with a spacious courtyard; though fallen into disrepair, it was primitive and simple, and surrounded by several flourishing Chinese scholartrees. While pondering the possibility of finding rarities here, on a whim, I knocked on the door and was invited in. My intuition proved correct — the owner presented me with several sets of folk-style porcelain bowls and plates of great value, and a small vase so astonishing that my heart raced. Back at my hotel, I was so excited I could hardly sleep, so I took out the vase and admired its beauty again.



This 15-centimetre-tall porcelain vase is coated with a greyish-white glaze and is decorated with mountain, water, bamboo groves, trees and birds painted in blue. Inscribed on the vase are "The People's Republic of China, 1952", "Is there too much bamboo?" and "Fiery red blossoms". It looks ordinary at the first glance; with a closer look, however, one will discover its distinctive charm.

In 1952, the new China was established for only three years. The kiln worker must have been impressed by the country's new name, or else, why did he inscribe "The People's Republic of China" twice on the vase?

In the shape of a bottle gourd, this porcelain vase has a sturdy body of balanced proportions. Creating the vase would not be difficult for a kiln worker. However, he probably felt awkward drawing on it: perhaps he had always wanted an elegant ornament for himself, like the rich people who bought the delicate official porcelain ware he routinely painted. As times changed, his dream could be realised, but how could he manage to draw his own home on his own vase?

Finally, plucking up his courage, he drew his amateur pictures. The mountain was covered with luxuriant trees growing profusely and birds resting on them. There was no pavilion in his village; however, always longing for one, he used his imagination. He drew some bamboo groves as well, but later worried about the quantity, so he inscribed "Is there too much bamboo?" Orchids filled the mountain slope and "Fiery red blossoms" was written above. He also painted some figures, possibly clouds or wild geese, to fill the space. The composition and style of the drawing appear to follow the temperament of a scholar, while at the same time have the forthrightness of folk art.

Though the figures take up most of the space on the vase, they are all evenly distributed. Trees are taller than the mountains, and birds larger than the houses. Nothing is drawn to proportion and the laws of perspective are not demonstrated, nevertheless, all the figures co-ordinate well. The drawing gives the feeling that it is created freely, yet also with diligence and humour. In fact, this painting probably reflects the kiln worker's notion of ideal life — peaceful, simple and modest.

The quintessence of folk art, that is to contain a human touch in an ordinary motif, is embodied in this vase, making it not only a rarity but also a distinctive masterpiece of art. Considering this, don't you agree that I would lose if I exchanged this kiln worker's vase for an official Qing-dynasty porcelain one?

Translated by Jess Tang

The Writer's Profile:

Mu Ren, a collector in China, studied Chinese and Western art history and theory. For many years, she has been staying in ancient towns and villages because she takes great interest in folk crafts, household utensils, villagers' private collections and farming tools. She is also an expert in curios and historical relics.

AN EXCURSION TO YUMEN PASS

Photos & article by Xie Guanghui

Celebrating the end of the excursion

Yumen Pass in Gansu Province has long been known as the gate which used to mark the ancient northwest border. In ancient times, caravans would pass this gate to continue their journey along the Silk Road. The name of Yumen eventually became the synonym of "far and remote". A famous Tang-dynasty poet, Wang Zhihuan, wrote a poem to describe his feelings after he was sent into exile in this area:

Far up from white clouds in Yellow River glides,
In mountains immeasurably high the lonely town lies,
Why does the flute bother to complain of now willow?
Beyond Yumen Pass no spring breezes ever blow.

This isolated border post lies in the southeastern corner of the Gobi Desert. It has long been deserted and there are no paved roads leading to it. With the classic poem in mind, I went to see the ancient pass.

I decided to track down Cao Hai, the chief of the Cultural Relics Section of Dunhuang, believing this warm and sincere fellow would be the best guide. Cao was familiar with the area, as he commuted across a section of the desert every day to get to his office in Dunhuang. So the four of us, Cao, my companion and I, and the head of the local tourist office, set off to the famous gateway.

Our van, shortly after leaving Dunhuang, took a turn off the road and on to the boundless Gobi Desert. There were no tracks and no signposts. One could imagine how easy it would be to become lost there. But Cao seemed optimistic and said that we need not worry. What was of more concern was whether the van would get stuck in the gravel. The land beneath us was very uneven, and the bus was constantly jolting. Fortunately, we soon came to a track used by a geological prospecting team. It was not so bumpy, but there were loose patches of soil in the ruts, and Cao said that we could easily become bogged down in it.

No one paid much attention to him at the time, but at about 11 a.m. the bus got stuck in this gravel, 30 kilometres from Yumen Pass. As we got out of the bus to have a look, the air outside hit us like that from a hot oven. The surface of the Gobi Desert, which reflected back the intense sunlight, was dazzling. The van's wheels kept spinning and not getting any traction. We dug out the loose soil from under the wheels and filled up the pits with stones. The heat was so intense that the stones scalded our hands, so we removed the seat covers and used them as bags to carry the hot stones. The van tried once more to move forward, but became stuck again. Cao shook his head, "The sand is too loose. I'll go and get help." He headed off with the head of the tourist office.

There was not a patch of cloud in the sky as they walked to the nearest village seven kilometres away, a walk of at least two hours. By then it would be the hottest time of the day in the Gobi, which even camels are unable to bear. The time passed extremely slowly. We did see a truck coming in our direction, however, the vehicle never slowed down, but instead raced past us.

At about 3 p.m. a jeep pulled up and Cao jumped out. At 2 p.m.in Erdong Village in the middle of the farming season, they found hardly anyone in the village. They searched everywhere and finally found a household who owned a jeep; the owner immediately volunteered to help, but insisted that they all have a bottle of beer before setting off. The jeep soon managed to pull our van out of the rut, and we finally got to Yumen Pass.

The pass is a set of four walls around a quadrangle, with one gate on the western wall and another on the northern wall. Over the years the walls have gradually decayed, leaving the gates looking like dull cave entrances. It was hard to imagine that on the desolate ruins there had once been such an important gateway as Yumen.

It was 10 p.m. by the time we returned to Dunhuang. But the night market there was still in full swing. We celebrated our successful excursion with a glass of beer.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

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Trying to push the van out of the sandy gravel

Protection of 3,000 Islamic Holy Sites, Ningxia

Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region in Northwest China has been working hard to protect religious sites over the past two decades. One such example took place in Wuzhong City, where the government revised its original plan in road-building to protect a mosque with an additional one million yuan (US$120,000). The region now has 3,000 Islamic holy sites, each serving an average of 500 Hui people (Chinese Muslims). Nationally, the more than 20 million Muslims go to 23,000 mosques.

Since the early 1980s, Ningxia has refurbished many of its mosques with financial support from both the central and local governments.

Bridge Tying Macau and Zhuhai

With the cutting of ribbons in both Zhuhai and its neighbour Macau, the construction of a bridge linking them will soon begin. Named Lotus Flower Bridge, after the symbol on the flag of the future Macau Special Administrative Region, the bridge will connect Macau's Taipa Island and Zhuhai's Hengqin Island. The 1.3-kilometre-long bridge will open a second land crossing border gate from Macau to the mainland of China. The project is planned to be finished before the handover of Macau on December 20, 1999. Construction of the bridge was decided by the Sino-Portuguese Infrastructure Co-ordination Commission, which is now considering construction of some other projects co-operatively by the two sides, one of the discussed projects being the extension to Macau of the Guangzhou-Zhuhai railway.

Volcanic Island, Fujian

A volcanic island has been found in Zhangpu County of East China's Fujian Province. Located two kilometres off the coast, the uninhabited Linjinyu Island is 72.7 metres above sea level, covering only 0.16 square kilometres. On the isle are found roaming goats, running springs and huge rocks formed by volcanic eruptions. With forested hills in its centre, the island has many small craters and trails left by rolling lava of centuries ago.

Tourism Revenue

China's tourism revenue rose to US$4.98 billion during the period from January to May, 10 percent up compared with the same period of last year. The number of tourists visiting China in this period was 25.28 million, 13.7 percent more than that of the previous year. China hopes the country's revenue from tourism can increase to five percent of the nation's GDP by the year 2000 from the present four percent.

Postal China 99, Beijing

The China International Postal Technology and Equipment Exhibition Beijing '99 will be held from August 22 to 26 next year at the Beijing Agricultural Exhibition Hall. The exhibition will highlight the 22nd Universal Postal Union (UPU) Congress, which is scheduled to open on August 23, 1999.

Postal China 99 will focus on current advanced postal technologies, equipment, new trends and prospects of postal communications in China and the world as a whole.

Search for US Plane Lost in 1944, Hubei

A search for a Flying Tiger Air Squadron plane, which is believed to have crashed into a lake 54 years ago during the World War II, is expected to be carried out. The search will take place in Xiafeng Lake of Jianli County in Central China's Hubei Province. The Flying Tigers, led by US Air Force General Lee, supported the Chinese army and people against the invading Japanese troops. One of the witnesses to the crash, Luo Benhou, now in his 80s, recalled that on the morning of May 6, 1944, a burning fighter plane dropped into Xiafeng Lake near his village when he was working in his paddy fields at the time.

Emperor's Bathroom, Liaoning

In Northeast China's Liaoning Province, an ancient bathroom complete with a well-designed drainage system has been found in the ruins of a temporary palace of the Emperor Qin Shihuang. The bathroom was used by the emperor and his concubines about 2,000 years ago. The palace complex consisted of six parts laid out in a T-shape, covering an area of 25 square kilometres. The internal structure of the newly found bathroom remains intact and is quite similar to that of a modern bathhouse. Many drainage tunnels were found under the floor connected with cisterns in which waste water was stored.

China's Second Busiest Port, Qingdao

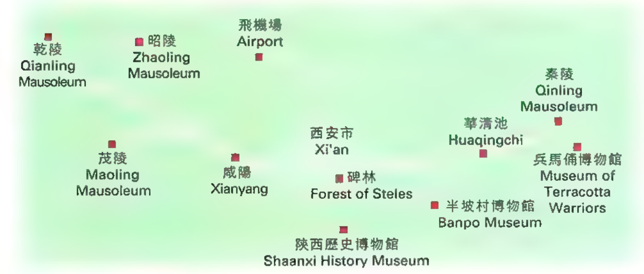
Qingdao, a coastal city in East China's Shandong Province, handled 37 million tons of cargo, including 570,000 tons of containers, in the first half of the year, thus earning itself the rank as the second largest port in China. One of the country's oldest ports, Qingdao has an annual handling capacity of 85 million tons, and is expected to reach 100 million tons by the year 2000. Qingdao Port has 16 domestic and international shipping lines with destinations in the United States, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

Xi'an: Tracking Its Imperial Antiquities

Article by Stone

Statement

This article is not for tourists craving modernity but for those with great interest in China's history, cultural relics and ancient sites. Better than any guidebook, a native of Xi'an introduces you to the best tours to take in his hometown.



Attractions and Recommended Tours

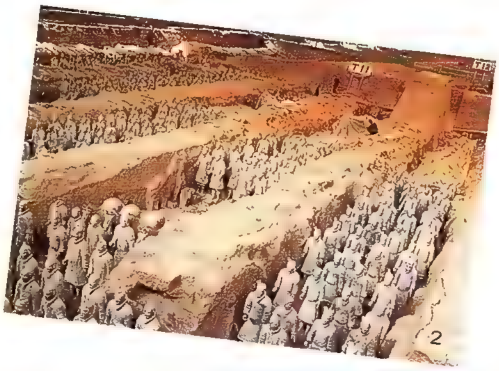
1. One-day Tour to the East: **The Terracotta Warriors and Imperial Concubine's Hot Springs** The world-famous Mausoleum of Emperor Qin Shihuang and the Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses lie in the eastern suburbs of Xi'an. The mausoleum, an earthen mound about 40 metres high, has yet to be excavated, but a spectacular underground vault of terracotta figurines of warriors and horses buried with this first emperor of the unified ancient China is open to the public. In a vast array, these 6,000 life-sized, individually-moulded figures are awesome.

Returning from the mausoleum, you will pass by Huaqingchi — "The Tang-dynasty Hot Springs Baths" — still well preserved today. There are many hot spring baths here, one of which is called "Imperial Concubine Yang's Bathing Pool". Legend states it was specially made for Yang Yuhuan, the favourite concubine of Li Longji, a licentious emperor of the Tang Dynasty. Today, anyone can bathe in the public hot spring bathhouses here for a fee.

Closer to Xi'an, is the Banpo Museum, built over the actual dig site, which displays the Yangshao Culture of 5,000 years ago. In the museum lives of the ancient people are demonstrated — their slash-and-burn crop cultivation and pottery-making.

2. One-Day Tour to the West: **Exquisite Stone Carvings and Joint Imperial Burial Place** West of Xi'an is the Maoling Mausoleum where Emperor Wudi of the Han Dynasty, the pioneer of the Silk Road, was buried. The mausoleum is much larger in size than that of Qin Shihuang. Nearby are some very interesting stone carvings in front of the tomb of Huo Qubing, a great Han-dynasty general, who fought several campaigns against the Xiongnus (Huns). Most of the stone carvings are horses, in honour of this brilliant military strategist. Among the finest stone sculptures is "The Horse Treads on the Huns". Further west is the Qianling Mausoleum on the slopes of Mount Liangshan, the joint burial place of Emperor Gaozong and Empress Wu Zetian. The husband and wife were both the supreme rulers of their time and were buried in the same tomb chamber after they died; this is the only such case in China. It is said that the tomb chamber is inside the hill's main naked sandstone peak, and the entrance passage is sealed off with molten iron. No excavation has yet been done here. Numerous stone figures and horses that flank the one-kilometre Divine Way are impressive.

3. One-Day Tour in the City: **National Treasures and 1,000-Stone-Inscription 'Library'** On one side of the Greater Wild Goose Pagoda built during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) lies the famous Shaanxi History Museum. The outside of the museum resembles a Tang-dynasty palace, and inside, the exhibits displayed astonish every visitor. They include Western Zhou-dynasty bronzes, Qin-dynasty horses and chariots, Han-dynasty gold, silver and jade objects and Tang-dynasty



murals — all first-class antiquities, not only in China but also the world. One section within the museum is the Forest of Steles, which houses more than 1,000 famous steles from the Han to the Qing dynasties. They are valuable historical documents of ancient times, and form a veritable "library" of classical stone inscriptions.

4. Impromptu Tour: **City Walls, Local Snacks, and Tang-style Dances** Although many ancient city walls still exist in China, a city wall which is so large in size and so well preserved, with four complete gate towers like Xi'an's is rare. Generally, visitors prefer the southern city wall, because this section is the best restored and close to the Bell Tower, Drum Tower and Greater Wild Goose Pagoda.

The Ancient Culture Street, originally called Art Academy Gate, is renowned far and wide. This street has shops all in ancient style, selling paintings, calligraphic works, writing tools, and antiques.

Another ancient culture street at Beiyuanmen close to the Bell and Drum Towers also has many snack bars and stalls specialising in typical local foods. On Majia Cross Street or Damaishi Market, you will find various kinds of authentic Hui snacks.

In the evening the Tang Music Palace on Chang'an Street outside the Southern Gate offers not only Tang-style imperial food but also a chance to enjoy the Tang-palace music and dances.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

About the author:

Stone, a reporter of Hong Kong China Tourism, born and bred in Xi'an, knows the streets and lanes of the ancient city like the back of his hand. In recent years he has done many reports, travelling almost the whole of China. His writings include a guidebook entitled *The Yellow River and Central China*. Stone likes to travel alone when working on his report.

1. **The ancient Xi'an city walls (by Pan Ke)**
2. **Qin terracotta warriors and horses (by Yang Limin)**
3. **A temple gate decorated with a dragon-head**
4. **The Tang-dynasty Arts Museum (by Zheng Yunfeng)**

Suggestions:

The above are recommended tours for a three-day visit to Xi'an. A one-day visit is possible as follows: in the early morning visit the terracotta warriors and horses, and then return to the Shaanxi History Museum in the city; at noon try some typical local foods at the Hui street, then go sightseeing at the Bell Tower, the Drum Tower, the Forest of Steles, the Ancient City Wall, and the Ancient Culture Street; in the evening enjoy the music and dances at the Tang Music Palace.

If you have more than three days in Xi'an, you can visit the Famen Temple, Zhouyuan Bronze Museum and Zhaoling Mausoleum (tomb of Emperor Taizong of the Tang Dynasty), and take a tour eastward to Huashan Mountain, one of China's five sacred mountains, also know as the "No. 1 Precipitous Peak Under Heaven".

Accommodation: Xi'an offers many choices of hotels. A standard room of four-star hotels is around 600 yuan a night. Three-star hotel rooms are 400 yuan a night, and two-star hotel rooms, 200 yuan. One-star hotels are everywhere, costing around 150 yuan a night, but with complete facilities.

Shopping: What are good buys in Xi'an? The answer: anything ancient or native. At the Ancient Culture Street you can buy calligraphy models by celebrated calligraphers of different dynasties, replicas of tri-colour glazed pottery of the Tang Dynasty, pottery figurines of the Qin Dynasty, bronzes and folk cultural relics of the Ming and Qing dynasties and the Republic Period. At Tanshi Food Street you can buy native products such as Northern Shaanxi dates, Hanzhong dark rice, and Qinling walnuts.

Recreation: Compared with coastal cities, Xi'an's night life is still at the preliminary stages. But most hotels have fairly modern facilities for recreational activities. In addition, there are over a dozen public bowling alleys in the different districts. Stage performances are offered in some restaurants.

Transport: In Xi'an transport is mainly by public bus and taxi. Taxi fare is reasonable, starting from five or six yuan, with a trip across the city only about 10 yuan. On the street opposite the People's Building, bicycles are available for rent at only 10 yuan a day. This is a very convenient way to go sightseeing in the ancient city. To visit scenic spots in the suburbs, take long-distance buses. Three-star or four-star hotels usually organise one-day tours, which provide mini-bus and guides.

Other Information:

Dialect: Most Xi'an residents speak the local dialect, or Henan dialect. People under the age of 50 can usually speak standard Chinese. Some younger people do speak English. The local dialect is loud, but it does not mean that the local people are not hospitable.

Caution: Take care particularly around the railway station and on the public buses; beggars and pickpockets abound. Hiring a taxi is the best solution.

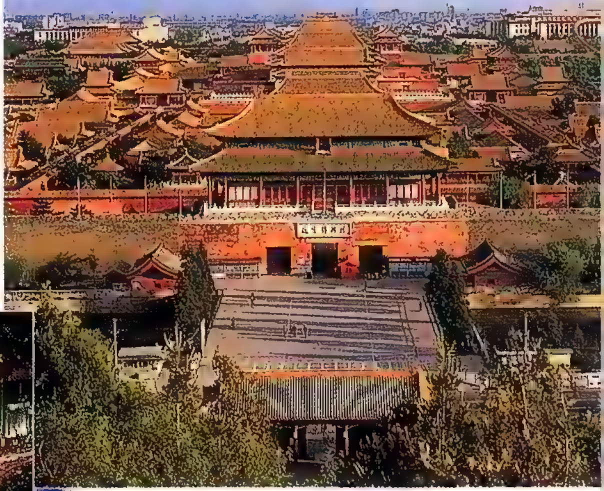
Note: Xi'an is one of the most ancient cities in China. After the Zhou Dynasty established its capital in Xi'an 3000 years ago, 13 dynasties took Xi'an as their imperial city and it flourished for about 2,000 years.

SURVEY OF 10 CHINESE CITIES

Each person has his or her preference for special holiday spots. Some people are fascinated with Beijing's historical and cultural sites while others prefer the more advanced and modern style of Tokyo. Some are willing to go through hardship to explore the secrets of Tibet. Others say jokingly that only fools will go to a small Pacific island to enjoy the sun and the beach.

The purpose of this survey is to identify the cities where people most love to go for a good time. Listed here also are places most favoured by well-known travellers such as **Rebecca Lee, Lun Wenbiao, Jian Peifa and Zhong Zhengqin.**

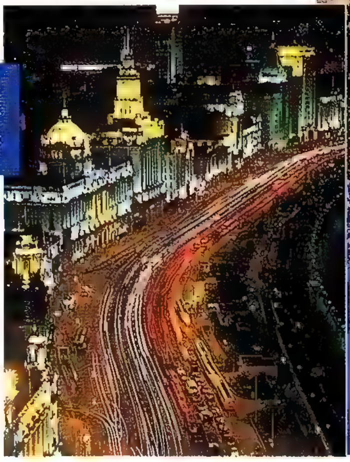
1 Beijing



The former Imperial Palace, the largest architectural complex in the world (by Wang Wenbo)

Among the Chinese cities, Beijing stands out as the hottest tourist attraction. More than 70 percent of the voters like Beijing for its many historical monuments, such as the Great Wall, one of the seven wonders in the world, the former Imperial Palace, the largest and best preserved of palaces, and famous spots such as the Temple of Heaven and the Summer Palace. Moreover, it is the capital of the present China. Some people give straight answers: "As a Chinese, you must go there!" and "If you fail to reach the Great Wall, you are not a man." There are also people who enjoy strolling around in Beijing's old "hutongs" (alleys) and find many interesting things there.

3 Shanghai



The Bund in Shanghai at night (by Chan Yat Nin)

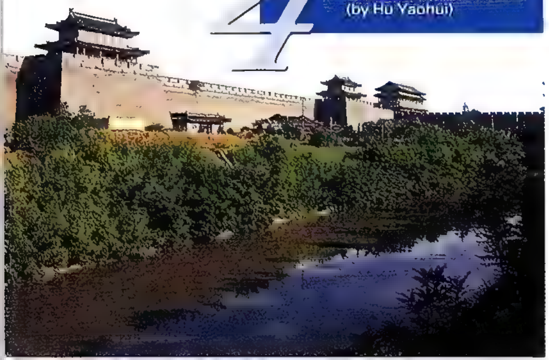
Shanghai is the third choice. People may wonder at first what attracts tourists to Shanghai, a city of so many people and vehicles. The answer is the city's old architecture, especially the buildings along the Bund with distinctive European features. Visitors are, of course, also attracted by the resounding name of "The port city of Shanghai". Moreover, the city is also the largest metropolis in China.

2 Hangzhou

Su Dongpo's Causeway at the West Lake in Hangzhou (by Zhang Xiaoquan)

Hangzhou comes next with its West Lake, for which people say, "As there is paradise in heaven, there are Suzhou and Hangzhou on earth." Some people have made three trips to Hangzhou simply for the sake of the West Lake — to see the sights of "Spring Morning on Su Dongpo's Causeway" in spring, "Lotus Flowers in the Breeze at Quyuan" in summer, "Residue of Snow on the Broken Bridge" in winter. In autumn, people often go there on their honeymoon. Almost all visitors go to Hangzhou specifically to see the West Lake. They claim they are not disappointed: "The West Lake is really enchanting!"

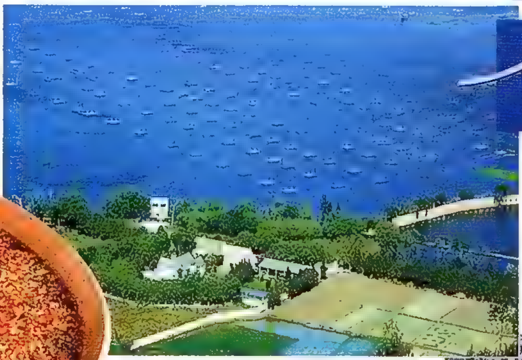
4 Xi'an



Ancient city wall in Xi'an (by Hu Yaohui)

Xi'an is the fourth because it is another city with many historical relics, including the terracotta warriors and horses of the Qin Dynasty, another of the great wonders in the world.

MOST FAVOURED CHINESE / FOREIGN TOURIST CITIES



5 Kunming

The quiet Lake Dianchi in Yunnan (by Peng Zhenge)

But for the votes garnered by Dali and Lijiang, Kunming should have ranked higher because people like the eternal spring in all four seasons of the year in the city and are interested in the lifestyle of the ethnic minorities living in the vicinity of the city.

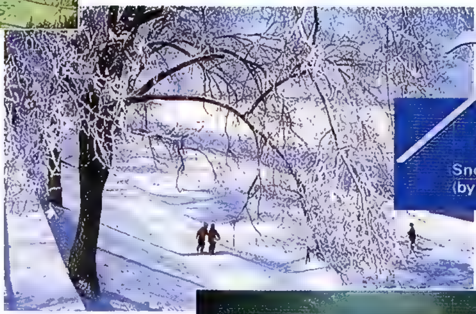
Chengdu ranks the sixth with its delicious refreshments and its famous peppery "hot pot".

6 Chengdu

Peppery "hot pot" in Sichuan (by Tian Zhenmin)

As there is no snow in the south, people go to Harbin to enjoy the snow and take part in the ice-lantern festival.

It deserves special notice that Lhasa in Tibet and Urümqi in Xinjiang won respectively the eighth and ninth places. People do not reject them because they are far away, but are attracted by the mysteries there: "Can't imagine the Tibetan believers pay homage to the Buddha by prostrating themselves on the ground!" "I still remember the splitting headache I suffered for lack of oxygen on the high altitude." "Turpan is unbearably hot!"



7 Harbin

Snow scene in Harbin (by Su Changde)

8 Lhasa

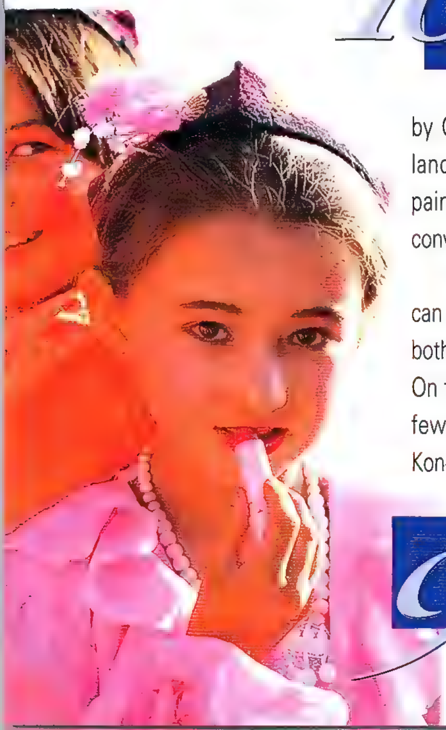
Potala Palace in Tibet (by Wang Miao)

10 Guilin

A "live" landscape painting in Guilin (by Chen Yajiang)

The tenth place was won by Guilin. Many people say that the landscape in Guilin is like a "live" painting that changes and flows to convey different poetic moods.

From the votes cast by readers, we can see that the voters have travelled both the north and the south in China. On the whole, the southern cities won fewer votes because people in Hong Kong are familiar with them.



9 Urümqi

A young Uygur girl in Xinjiang (by Chan Yat Nin)

Notes:

According to a forecast made by the World Tourist Organisation, China will be the hottest tourist country in the world in the year 2020.

Data from the Hong Kong Immigration Department show that in the year 1997, temporary departures from Hong Kong, instead of falling, rose to 41,605,128, an increase of more than 10 percent over 1996. The philosophy of life of the people in Hong Kong seems to be: work hard and play even harder.

How are the Cities Ranked?

The survey was based on the votes cast by 253 readers expressing their preferences for their most-favoured tourist city destinations and the top ten Chinese and foreign cities with the largest number of votes are listed. We then gathered further data and the opinions of the readers by telephone.

SURVEY OF 10 FOREIGN CITIES

1 Paris

Enchanting city lights in Paris (by Chan Yat Nin)

As for foreign cities, most of the votes were won by European cities. The fact that six of the 10 best-liked foreign cities are in Europe shows that readers have a special liking for Europe. Why do they like Paris? Nine out of 10 answered: "Because it is romantic." Paris seems to be the embodiment of "romance". Quite a few ladies said that they like Paris for its shopping. But there were people who transferred their votes from Paris to London because they think the French are too haughty and the streets of Paris are full of dog droppings. They said that compared with the French, the English are more friendly and that the British Museum is the most admirable and treasure-filled museum they have visited.

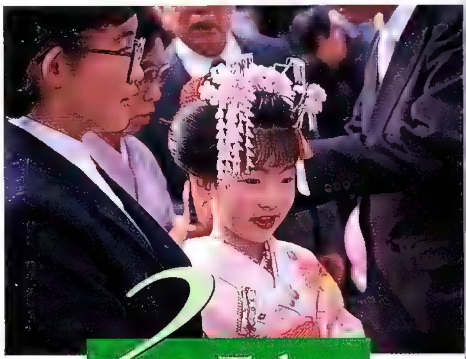
Tokyo comes second. The voters are unanimous that Tokyo is truly an advanced modern city which is also clean and has convenient transportation. The electronic products sold in the stores are truly fascinating wonders. But high expenses are a factor there. "Who is willing to pay dozens of dollars for a set lunch at McDonald's?"

The European architectural masterpieces in Rome always draw sighs of admiration. At Piazza di Spagna, one can spend a whole leisurely day over a cup of cappuccino.

Sydney is the fifth choice. People who have been there all praise the friendliness of the local people. There are also people who like Sydney because it is a port city, where "sea gulls fly by the ferryboat."

Vienna, the city of music, gives one the impression of cultural and artistic refinements. "If you love art and music, you will love this place."

5 Sydney



2 Tokyo

A young girl in kimono, Tokyo (by Tang Zaiqing)

6 Vienna

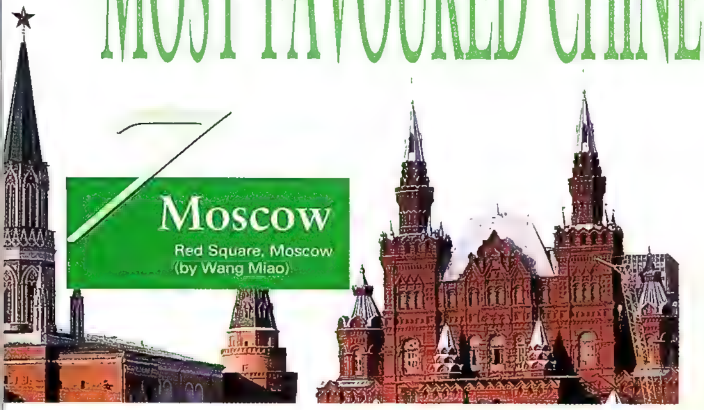
3 London

Tower Bridge, UK (by Rong Shunqing)

4 Rome

The Colosseum, Rome (by Catherine Lee)

MOST FAVOURED CHINESE / FOREIGN TOURIST CITIES



7 Moscow

Red Square, Moscow (by Wang Miao)

Moscow, the seventh city, and Prague, the eighth city, are both Eastern European cities. Everybody would love to see Moscow's Red Square and the history of the former great superpower, the old Soviet Union. Those who love Prague are enchanted by the European atmosphere that permeates the whole city. In quaint old Prague, "strolling along a path of pebbles or spending an evening in an old castle are memorable experiences." Moreover, things are less expensive here than in Western Europe.

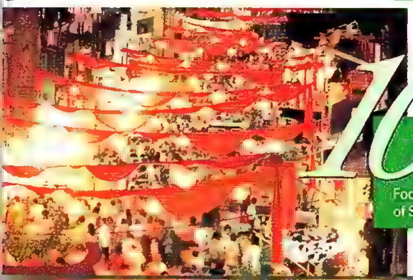
Kuala Lumpur, the ninth, is an ancient and at the same time modern city, where the juxtaposition of the mysteries of the East and the high tech of the West has brought into being an entity with its own unique features.

The tenth city, Singapore, is attractive for its delicious food. The "refreshment stalls" there offer chicken rice, satays, cold dishes, sweet deserts and other tidbits. There are also Chinese cuisine, Malay cuisine, sea food and countless varieties of other delicacies.

People actually love to see Indian cities for the interesting folk customs there, but think they are too dirty and too chaotic. They also like the peaceful surroundings of the cities in Canada, but think they are rather monotonous. They also like the amusements and culture in the cities of the United States, but think there are too many of the same kind. These are the reasons that people choose cities with history and culture where they can also enjoy themselves.

9 Kuala Lumpur

8 Prague



10 Singapore

Food stalls at night in Singapore (Courtesy of Singapore Bureau of Tourism)

The Choices of World "Travellers"

We call them "travellers" and asked them for their preferences, not because we wanted to "consult the authorities", but because they have travelled across all five continents and seven oceans. As experienced travellers, their knowledge and field of vision are broader, thus we asked them to choose the parts of the world they like best and tell us why.

Rebecca Lee: Natural science and study of the future

Written by Lang Yan

When I asked Rebecca Lee which one of the tourist cities she liked best, she thought for a while and answered: "I like the Antarctic.... Eh, I also like the Arctic." The two poles of the earth seem to be the places she likes best. She went to the Antarctic four times and the Arctic five times, thus reflecting the degree of her love for these places. When I asked her the reason, she replied without the least hesitation, "I like natural science and the study of the future."

Travel seems to have a deeper meaning in the mind of Rebecca Lee.

I liked noisy places 20 years ago; today, I prefer quiet.

Written by Zhong Zhengqin

More than 20 years ago, I liked big metropolises like Tokyo, London and New York, where I could observe the lifestyle and customs of the people and thought that was the real joy of a tourist. Today, when I go on a tour, I choose places where it is quiet with beautiful natural scenery, places like New Zealand and Lijiang in Yunnan. I shall also be happy to spend a week-end at Lantau Island, Hong Kong or wherever it is quiet.

The Mysterious Easter Island

Written by Lun Wenbiao

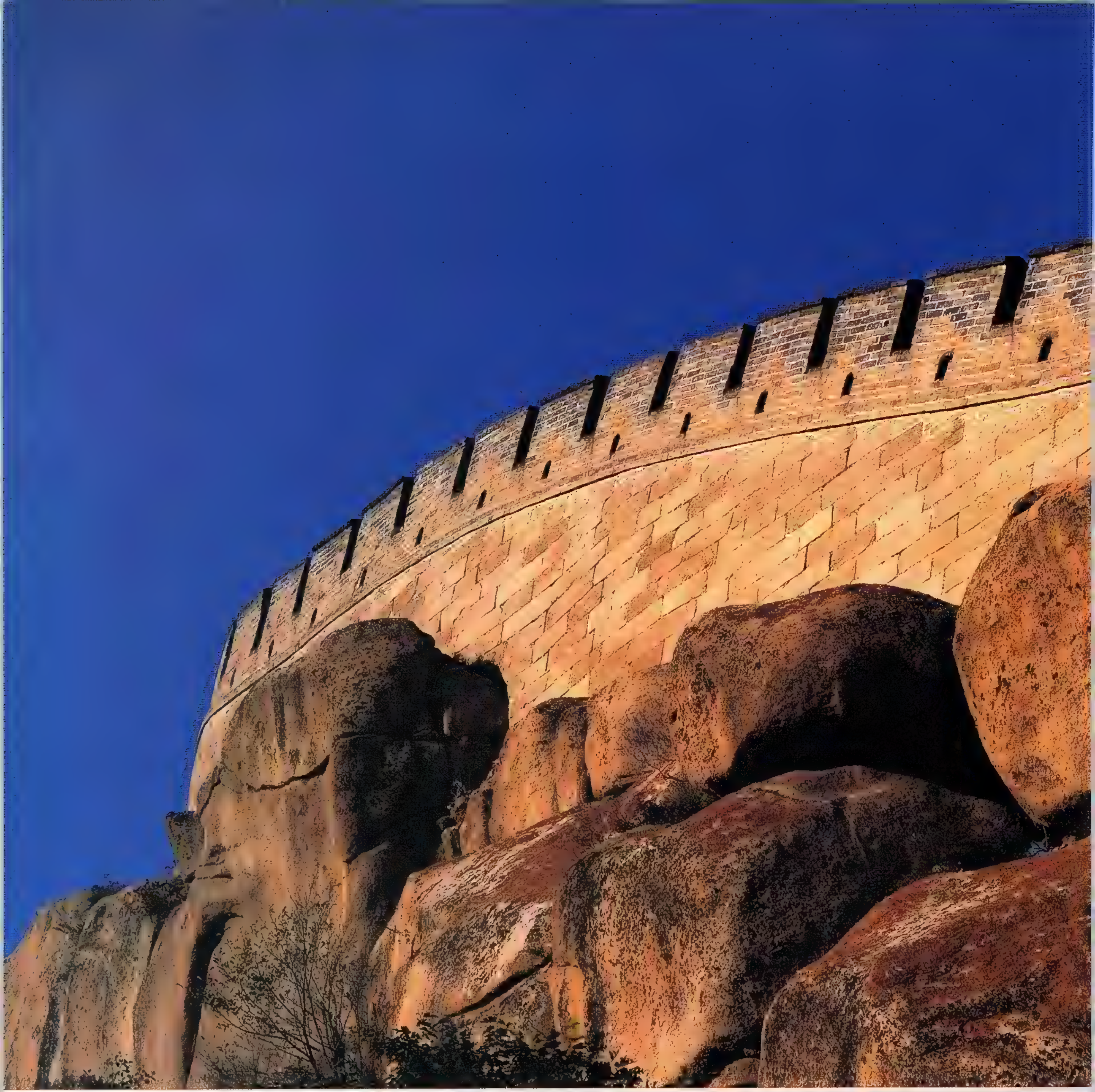
The world is so big that each place has its own attractions. I always go where chance takes me and allow myself to be guided by my feelings at the time. If I am asked where I like best, I would choose Easter Island, where the huge stone statues present a baffling mystery. I remember when I came face to face with the monoliths, I was assailed by a feeling that surpassed space and time. Driven by a sudden impulse, I wanted to speak to those masterpieces of sculpture.

Malacca's Complex Historical Background

Written by Jian Peifa

In my 20 years as an individual tourist, I have visited over 80 countries. The impressions I have carried away from many, however, are as transient as fleeting clouds. Only Malacca alone has aroused personal feelings that I can hardly put it into words.

In the past 400 years, Malacca was influenced one after another by the cultures of the Netherlands, Portugal, Britain, China and Malaysia. History has lent a multi-coloured international touch to the place.

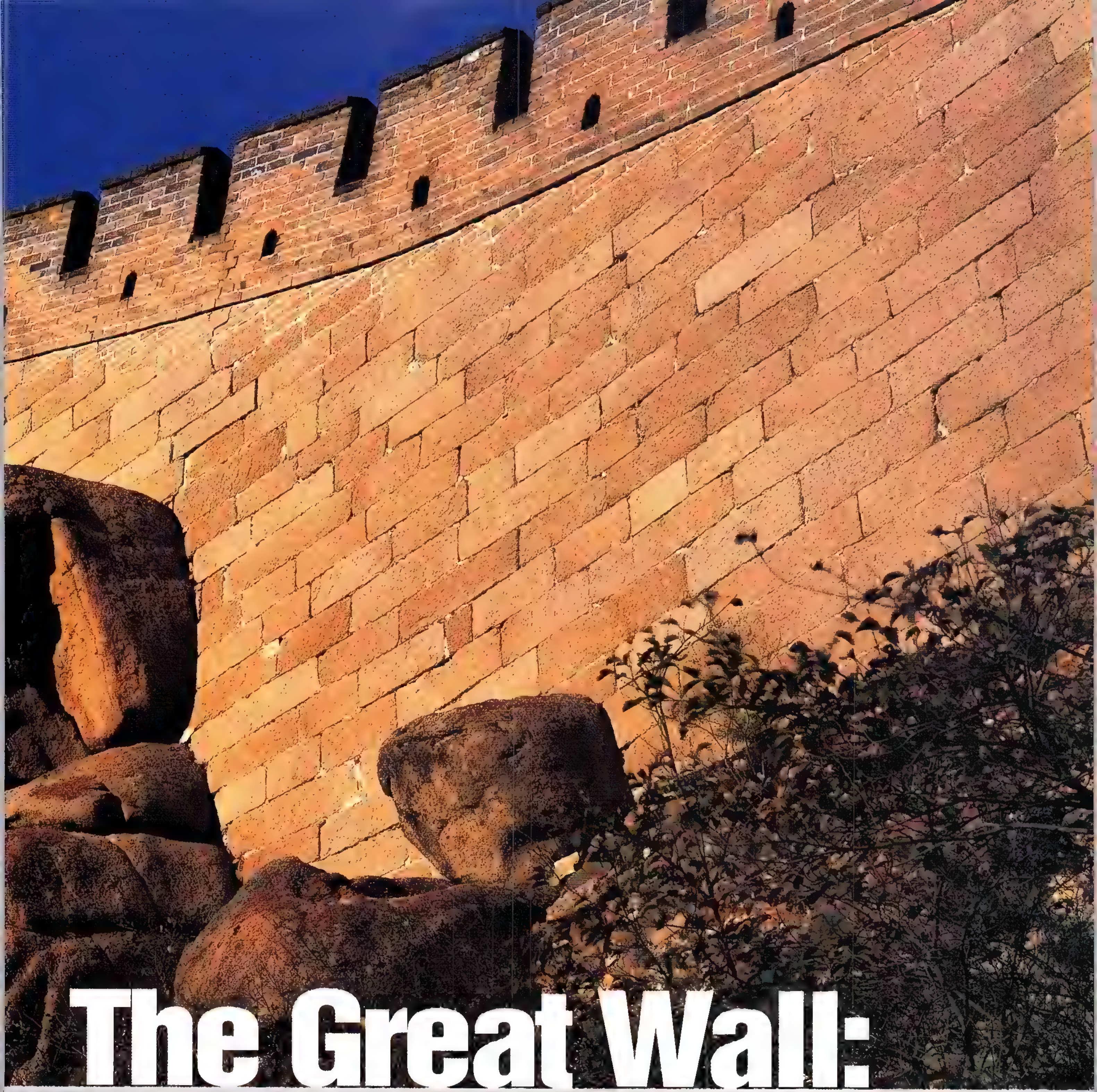


Editor's Note

The Great Wall is a mammoth defence work composed of walls of single or multiple layers, battlements, logistics facilities, watchtowers, and transportation networks. The front-line walls are fortified with numerous passes and forts. Combining formidable natural barriers with man-made strongholds, the venerated 6,400-kilometre-long Great Wall is one of the world's seven wonders. People from all over the world visit it with an almost religious obsession.

The state of Chu of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods around the 7th century B.C., was the first to construct the Great Wall. Other kingdoms followed suit: the "square city wall" of Chu, and the Great Wall of Qi, Zhongshan, Han, Wei, Zhao and Yan were each erected for self-defence, while the northern Great Walls of Zhao, Yan and Qin were built to keep northern nomads out.

After Qinshihuang, the founding father of the Qin Dynasty, unified China in 221 B.C., he had all the Great Walls built by former rival states in central China torn down. In 214 B.C., he began constructing the Great Wall. It is generally believed that the Qin-dynasty Great Wall was an expansion of the Zhao, Yan and Qin sections built during the Warring States Period. More sections were added during the Western Han, Jin and Ming dynasties.

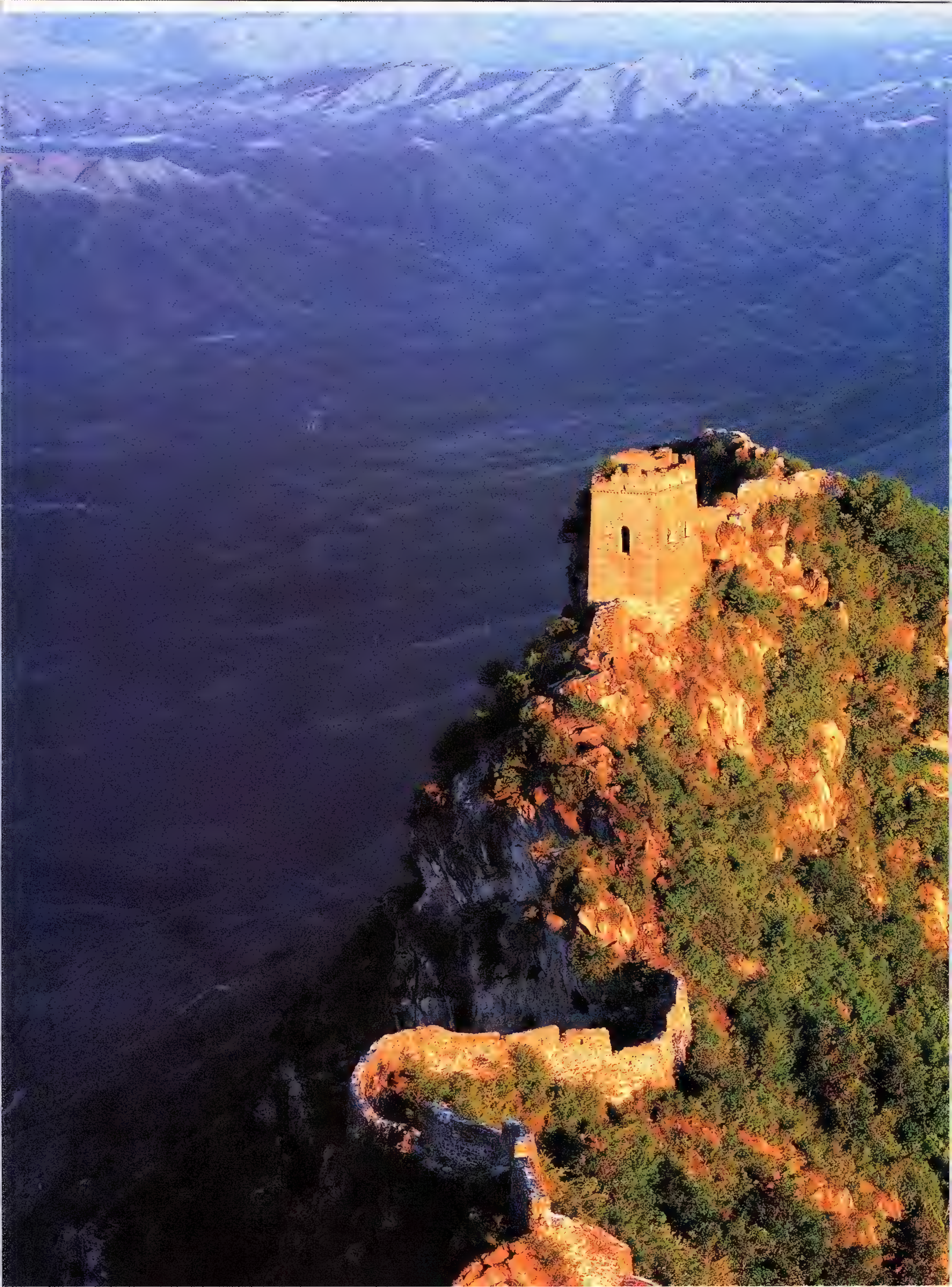


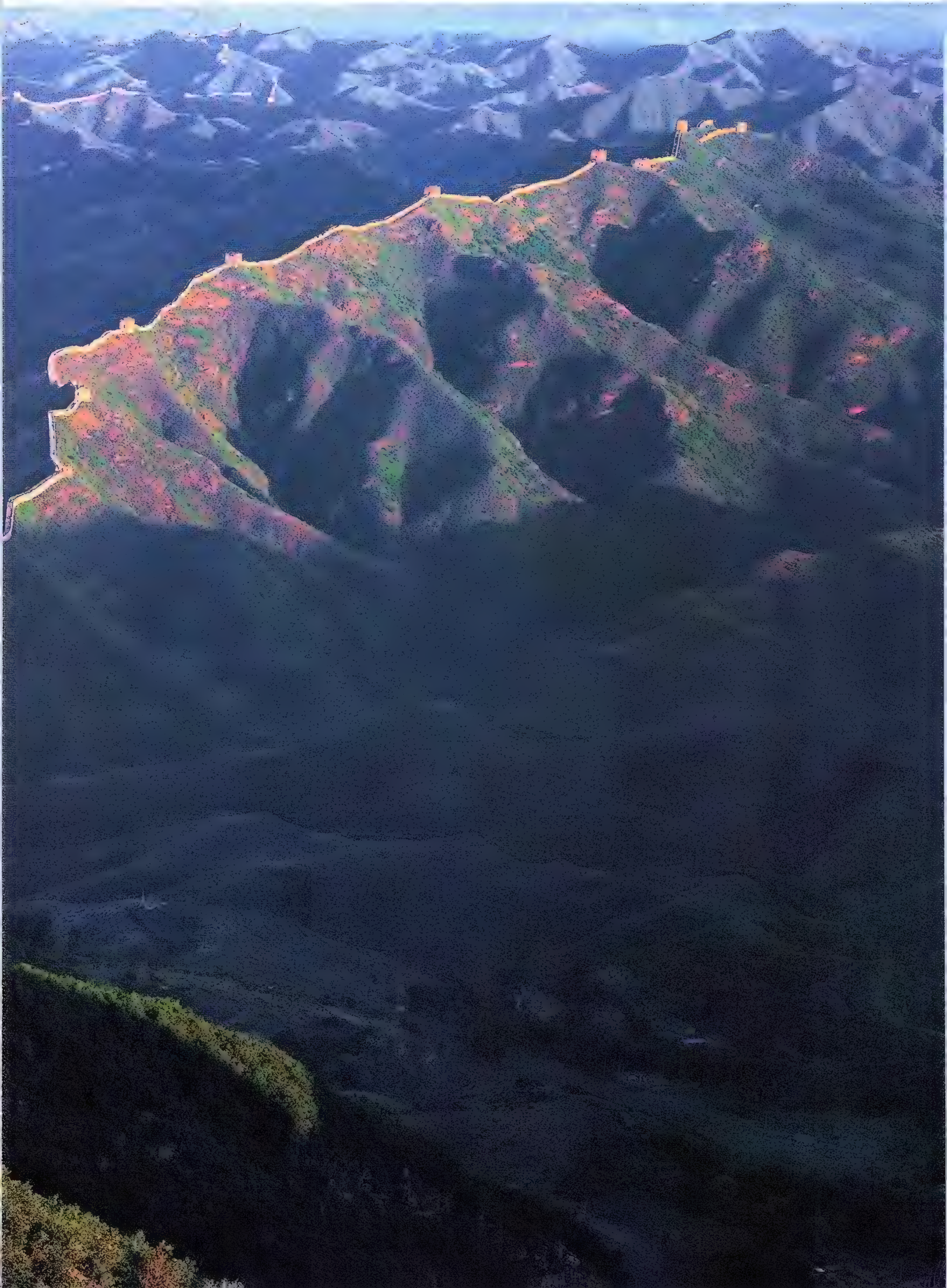
The Great Wall:

Adding to Nature's Formidability

Construction took place off and on over 2,000 years until the late Ming Dynasty. The Ming Great Wall begins in the east from the Yalu River in Liaoning Province and ends in the west at Jiayu Pass, Gansu Province, after winding its way through Liaoning, Hebei, Beijing, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Ningxia and Gansu. With the exception of a newly built section at Hexi Corridor, the Ming Great Wall was built based on all the original sections, and a great part of it remains intact to this day.

The Great Wall is too vast to be covered in a short article. The story printed below focuses on three sections, thus providing a glimpse of the Great Wall from varying perspectives. While the Beijing sections of the Great Wall are always in the limelight , the sections on the Loess Plateau remain little known to the outside world, for they have long been crumbling with age. It took a husband-and-wife team an entire decade to walk the entire length of the Great Wall. Here, with a love bordering on religious zest for this monumental defence work, they share their personal experiences with our China Tourism readers.





THE GREAT WALL
THROUGH A CAMERA'S EYE

Photos & article by Zhai Dongfeng

The sections of the Great Wall that have remained intact to this day are a legacy of the Ming Dynasty. Some of them are found in the suburbs of Beijing, and thronged with visitors all year round as popular tourist attractions. The top of the Great Wall provides an all-encompassing vista of the surroundings and instills pride in this man-made wonder.

Every season of the year the Great Wall has something different to offer. The different sections, be it Badaling, Mutianyu, or Jinshanling, each look attractive in a unique way. I was keenly aware of the seasonal changes of the Great Wall during repeated visits over the period from New Year Day of 1995 to May 1997. The following are excerpts from my diary.

January 1, 1995. Sunny. A Call at Wanjinglou

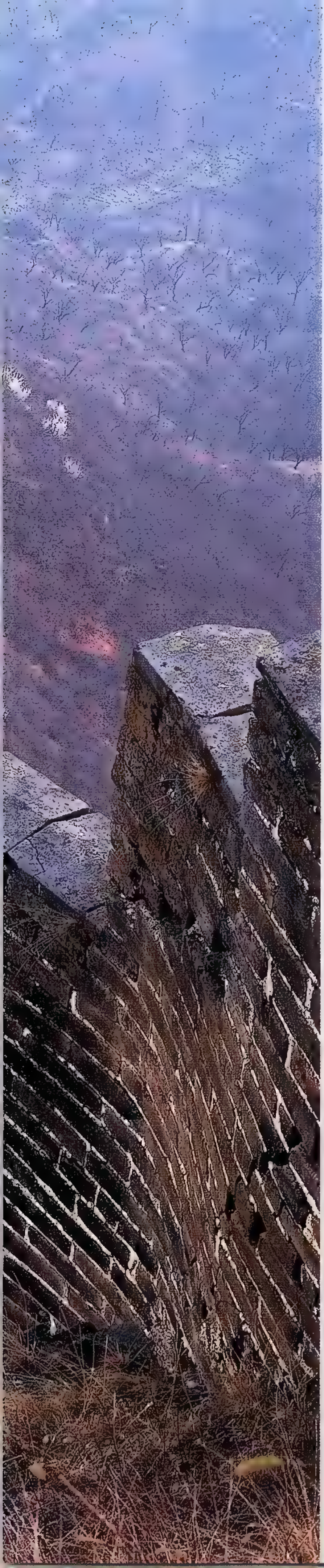
I was awoken by the alarm clock at 2 a.m. and quickly set off for Jinshanling together with a friend. We wanted to reach the Simatai section of the Great Wall and climb atop Wanjinglou (Gazing-at-Beijing Tower) before 7:30 a.m. Simatai is a dozen or so kilometres from Jinshanling. There are two roads which lead to Wanjinglou. One winds its way around the Simatai Reservoir and conducts to the tower along the mountain ridge by way of a "sky ladder", a "heavenly bridge" and a single wall; the other begins at the entrance to the ravine behind the tower, spirals up two mountains by the reservoir and reaches the tower by the rear. For safety's sake, we chose the second road. It took us about 40 minutes to reach the entrance to the ravine behind the tower. After a short respite, we trekked for several kilometres, climbing over a mountain until a narrow stream in the upper reaches of the Simatai Reservoir blocked our road ahead. There were a number of monoliths protruding from the surface of the stream, which served as ideal stepping-stones. We picked up some worn straw mats and spread them on the boulders. Just before my last jump the stone below my feet gave way, but

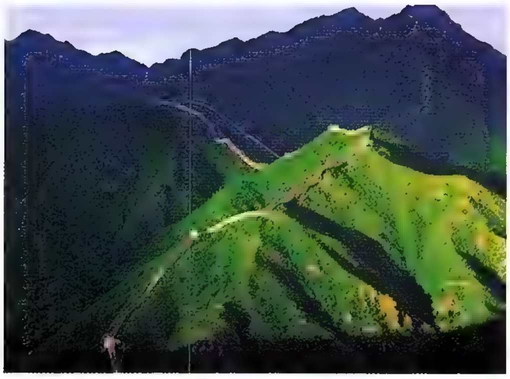
Opening page: The Great Wall at Badaling, 7-8 metres in average height (14 metres at its highest point), 6.5 metres thick at the base and 5.8 metres wide on the top, is the most imposing and impregnable section of the Ming-dynasty Great Wall.

Previous page: Xiannülou, or Angel's Tower, at Simatai, is known for its exquisite architecture.

Left: After rainfall in summer and autumn, mists often veil the Great Wall at Jinshanling, creating a charming scene

Right: The Great Wall at Jiankou, or Arrow Nock, lies under a snowy mantle.





instead of falling into the water, I slid on the frozen surface for four or five metres and ended up with icy, wet clothes.

The mountain slope lay under a thick layer of snow. In the moonlight we stumbled our way towards the top and climbed the tower at 7 a.m. The tower is poised on the brow of a steep cliff, which, at 986 metres above sea level, is known as the "summit" of the Great Wall. It is said that on a fine day one can see the lights of downtown Beijing from the top of the tower. I have visited the tower dozens of times, but never have I seen them. However, it was not disappointing, for I could see far onto the horizon, over an indescribable vastness.

When the sun rose over the horizon and shed its rays in all directions, Xiannülou (Angel's Tower) and Wanjinglou stood aloft like the heads of two dragons gazing fondly at the jumble of surrounding mountains. Thus, a day of a new year began.

May 18, 1995. A Night at Dazhenyu Gully

It was 7 a.m. when I gathered with a group of fellow photographers at the long-distance bus station at Beijing's Dongzhimen, to catch bus No. 916 to Huairou County. At the county seat, we switched to a bus bound for a place called Dongtai and alighted at the mouth of the road to Dazhenyu Township about 35 kilometres to the southwest of the town of Huairou. Trudging north for about five kilometres along a mountain path, we reached the foot of a section of the Great Wall that was built in 1569, during the Ming Dynasty.

There, the Great Wall hugs the contours of the terrain as it descends in a series of escarpments from the Erdaoliang Ridge in the west to the Dahuangding Summit in the east. Despite the passage of several centuries, it has escaped the ravages of man and the elements, remaining in perfect condition. In our photographers' instinctive love for vantage points, we climbed onto a tower at the western end. Despite its dilapidated condition, the tower's smooth floor, when covered with hay, provided a pleasant place to wriggle into our sleeping bags. We soon drifted into a sound sleep amidst the murmur of a gentle breeze.

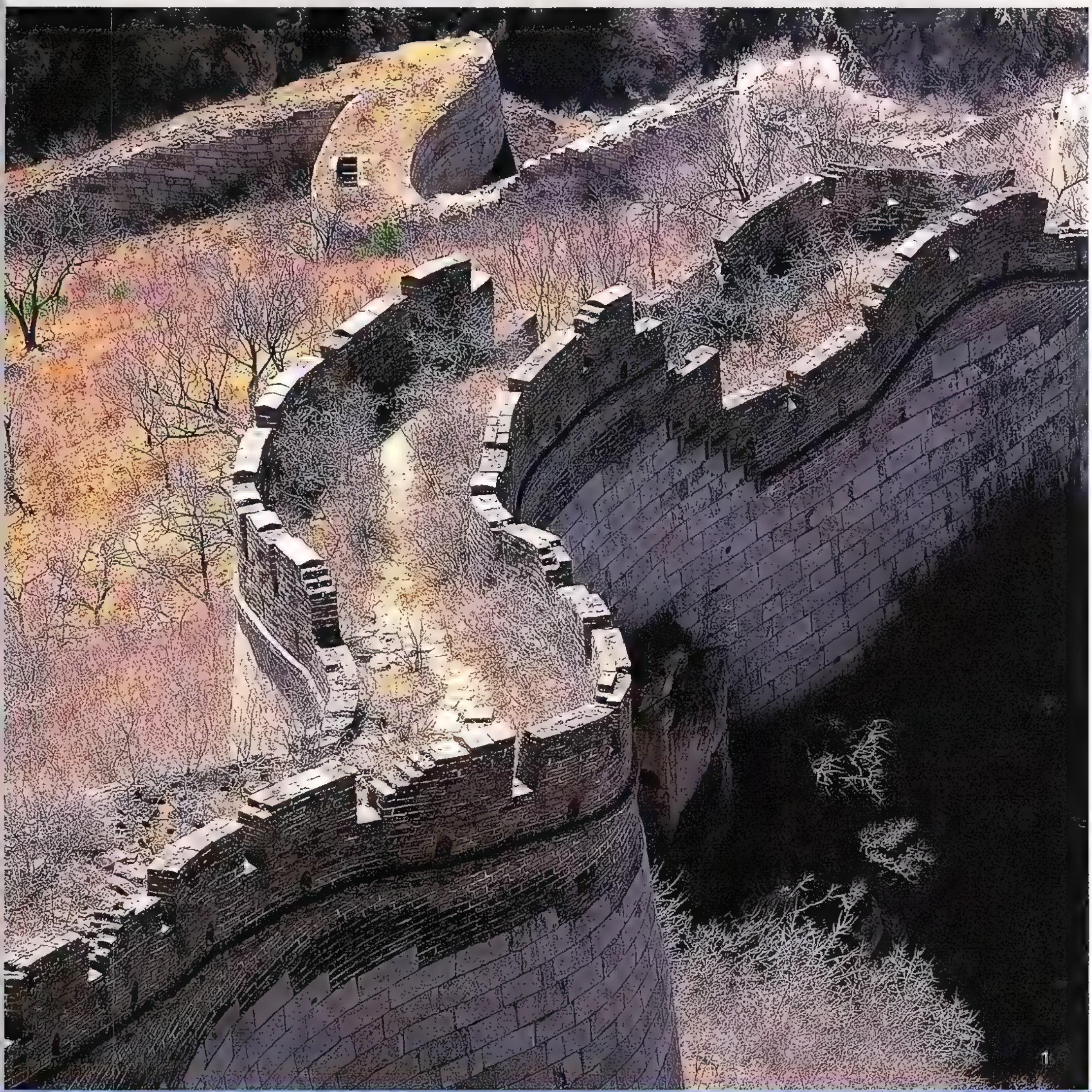
December 13, 1995. Light snow. Arrow Nock in a Snow Mantle

Knowing from previous experience that snow is likely to fall on the Great Wall at Jiankou (Arrow Nock) around the time of the Winter Solstice, and the sun's reflections provide ideal lighting for photography, I began packing for a two-night stay at Jiankou.

Food, water, sleeping bag, winter clothing, and photography kit — all these added up to more than 30 kilograms. As I got up at 5 a.m., snowflakes were drifting outside the window. At 7 a.m., I arrived at the long-distance bus station at Dongzhimen and caught bus No. 916 bound for Huairou County. By then the snowfall was thickening.

At Huairou I hailed a taxi, and reached Mutianyu at 10 a.m. Mutianyu, 70 kilometres from downtown Beijing, is situated in a temperate and humid zone with a thick vegetation cover. Located 10 kilometres to the southwest of Mutianyu, the Jiankou section of the Great Wall is virtually hanging on the edge of a perpendicular cliff more than 1,000 metres above sea level, looking formidable with a cluster of natural barriers bearing such awesome names as Zhengbeilou (Due North Tower), Niujijiaobian (Bull's Horn Ridge), Cabianguo (Escape by a Hair's Breadth), and Yingfeidaoyang (Eagle Flying Belly Up). Lacking visitors, the cable car between Mutianyu and Jiankou was closed, so I had to hike up the mountain. Trudging up a

Left : Dazhenyu Gully in Huairou County covered by flowering apricot and pear trees in mid-spring
Right : Golden rays lighting this section of the Great Wall like stage lights



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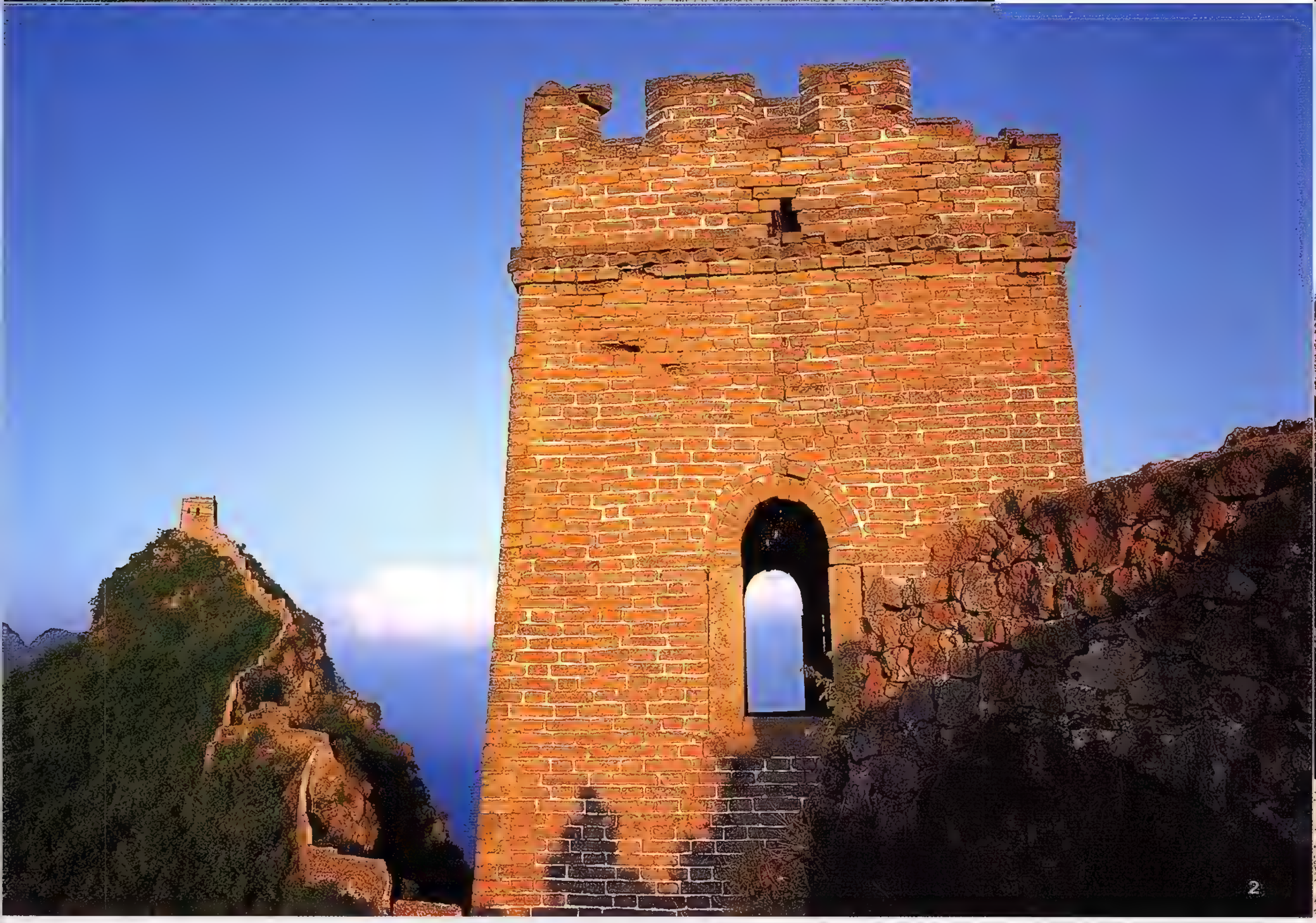
1. The Xishuiyu section of the Great Wall is built of stone slabs. The wall and most of its brick crenellated walls are in good condition.
2. A watchtower built on a ridge resembling the dorsal fin of a fish to the west of Wanjinglou (Gazing-at-Beijing Tower) at Simatai
3. Gubeikou, originally named Hubeikou (North Tiger Mouth), was a major battlefield of bygone days. This section of wall was first built during the Tang Dynasty. In the early Ming Dynasty, General Xu Da was ordered to build the Great Wall, and Gubeikou became one of its first group of mountain passes. The round watchtower found in this section of wall is not commonly seen elsewhere.
4. This section of the Great Wall is composed of multiple layers of barrier walls, an additional defence mechanism for soldiers in case the outer section fell into enemy hands.



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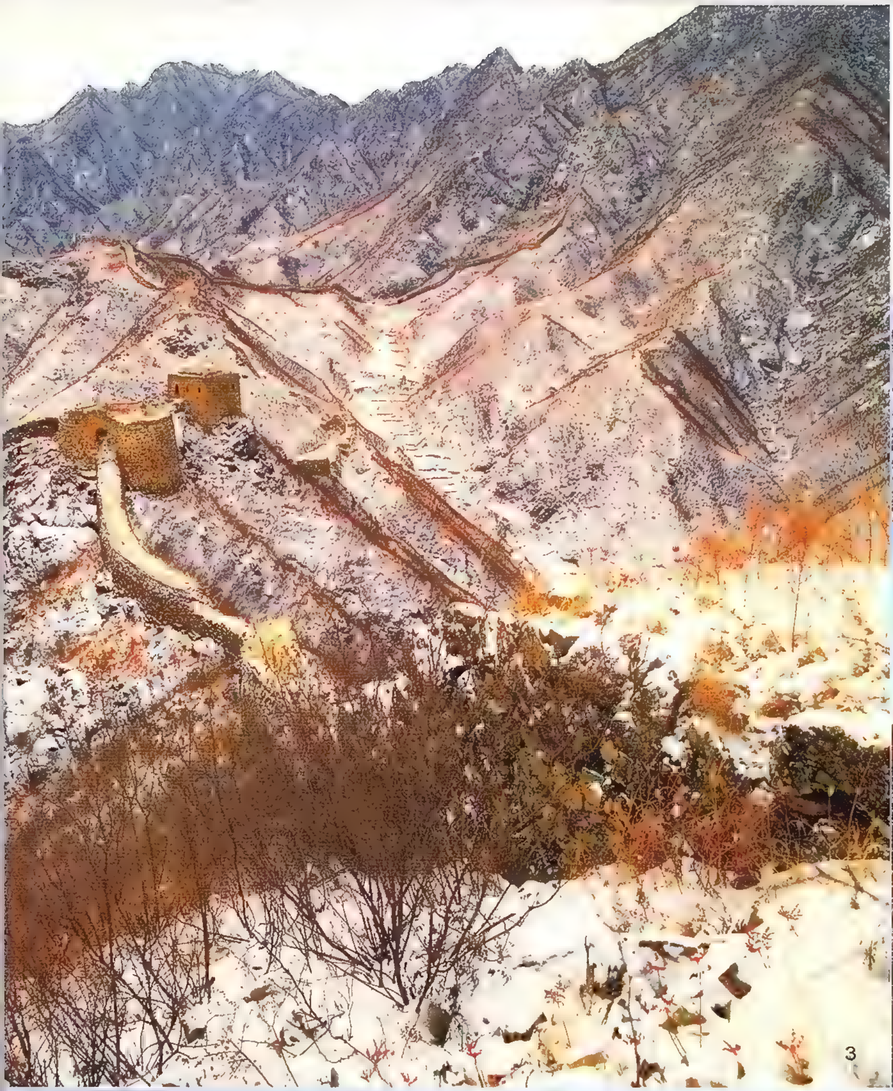
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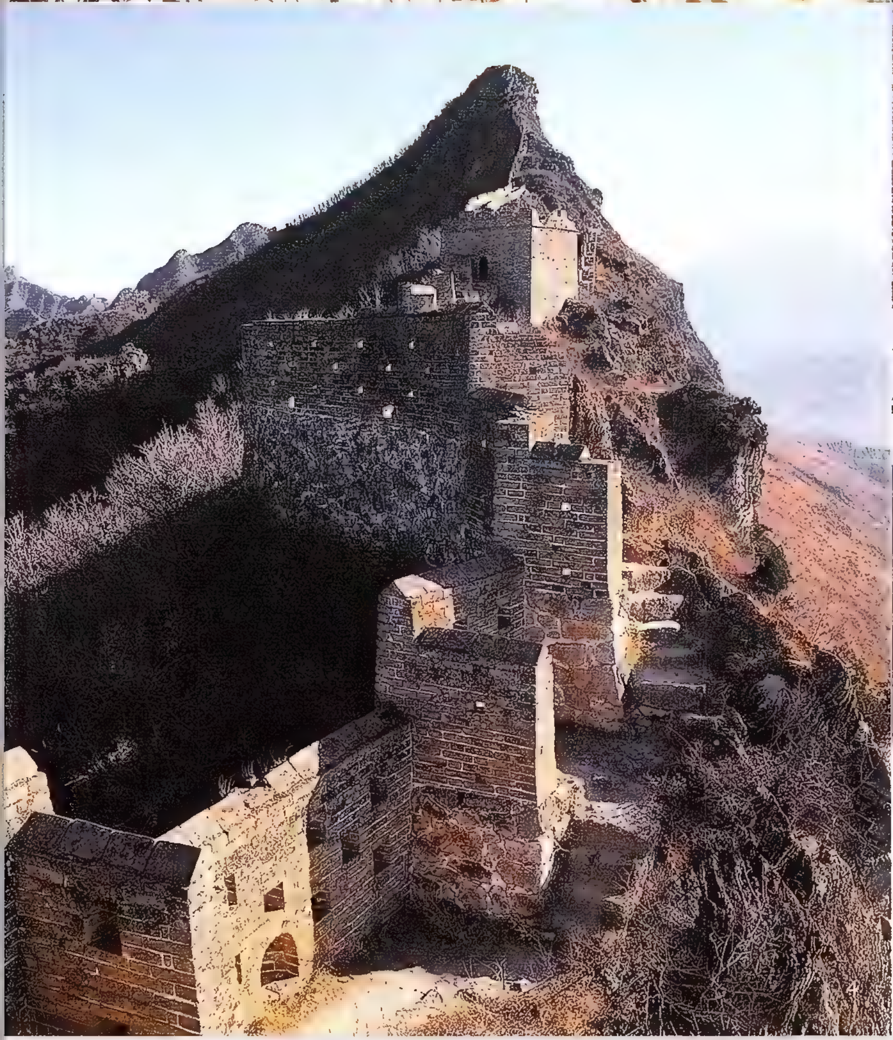
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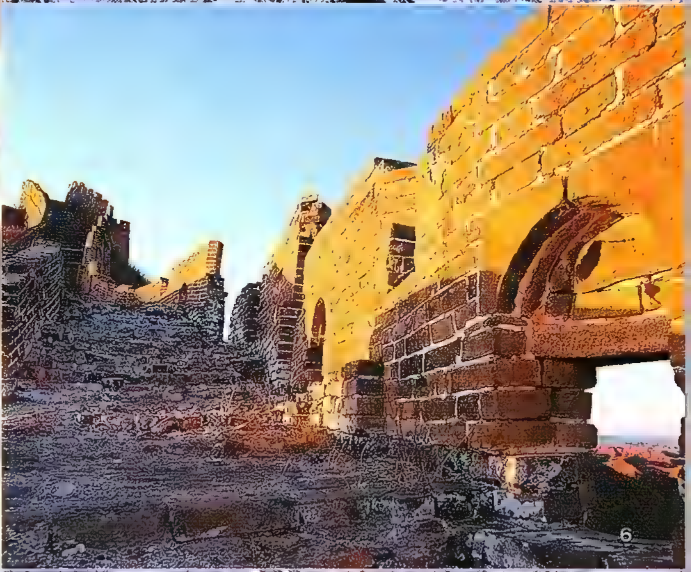
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5. Arrow Nock after a snowfall
6. The Great Wall at Gubeikou occupied an important strategic position in the ancient time.
7. A snowy scene at Badaling

1. **Badaling, a perennial favourite tourist attraction**
2. **This section of the Great Wall, situated to the west of Mutianyu, runs along the edge of precipitous cliffs and atop precarious peaks, earning it a fitting name, Jiankou, or Arrow Nock.**

stairway of more than 1,500 steps, however, is no simple task, and even worse for a man weighed down with a burden. The snowfall seemed endless, adding further difficulties.

It took me more than six hours to cover an otherwise three-hour distance. It was 4 p.m. when I arrived at Zhengbeilou and immediately I scavenged for firewood to keep myself warm at night.

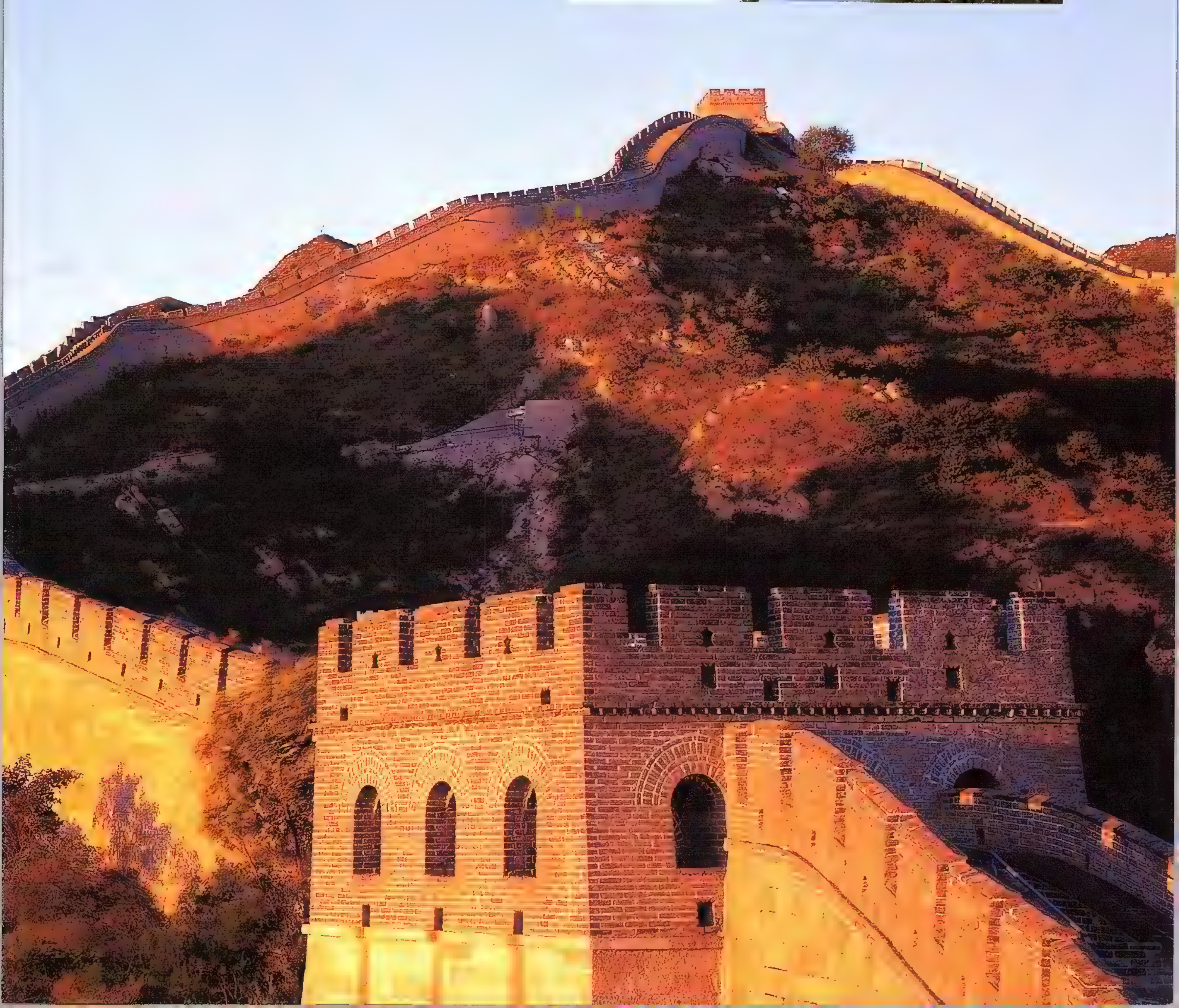
I had stopped at Zhengbeilou on several previous visits to the Great Wall. Part of the tower is still in good condition. Besides, it provides a panoramic view of the surroundings, and is a wonderful vantage point for taking pictures of the Jiankou section of the Great Wall. In winter, night falls earlier than usual; at five in the afternoon the outside world was already pitch black. The temperature plummeted to -10°C. I built a bonfire to keep the cold at bay, and hid in my sleeping bag after I had eaten. At about 7 a.m., the mountains in the distance became faintly visible, while an immense blanket of fog kept rolling over the Great Wall. With nearby tree branches rimmed with frost, the entire scene evoked memories of traditional landscape paintings.

April 8, 1996. Spring Descends on Yellow Flower City

At 6:30 a.m. I took bus No. 916 at Dongzhimen to Huairou County, from where a minibus took me to a section of the Great Wall named after the nearby Huanghuacheng (Yellow Flower City) Reservoir. Both ends of the reservoir dam fit into the Great Wall. During the rainy season, water tumbles down from the top of the dam to form an imposing waterfall.

It was noon when I reached a place where the Great Wall plunges downhill at an unbelievable gradient of 90 degrees. In the distance a section of the wall, known as the Eighteen-Step Ramp, resembled a sharp sword piercing into the blue sky.

Anticipating sunset pictures, I headed for the west mountain top at 5 p.m. However, midway up the wind rose violently, and dark



clouds came my way like a huge curtain. Half an hour later the rain lessened gradually, and a patch of sky revealed itself through the overwhelming clouds. Sensing some unusual sights at dusk, I braved the rain and climbed up the mountain. A little past six, I rigged up my camera and waited for the best moment to come. Minutes later, the setting sun finally penetrated the thick clouds and tossed golden rays on the Great Wall like a column of footlights shone intermittently onto a stage. However, the golden moment was short lived; five minutes later the clouds darkened the sky again.

After breakfast the following day, I began a trip in the direction of the Xishuiyu Reservoir, five kilometres west of Yellow Flower City. Xishuiyu differs from the Huanghuacheng Reservoir in that its dam is made of reinforced concrete and that it is larger. The reservoir is hemmed in

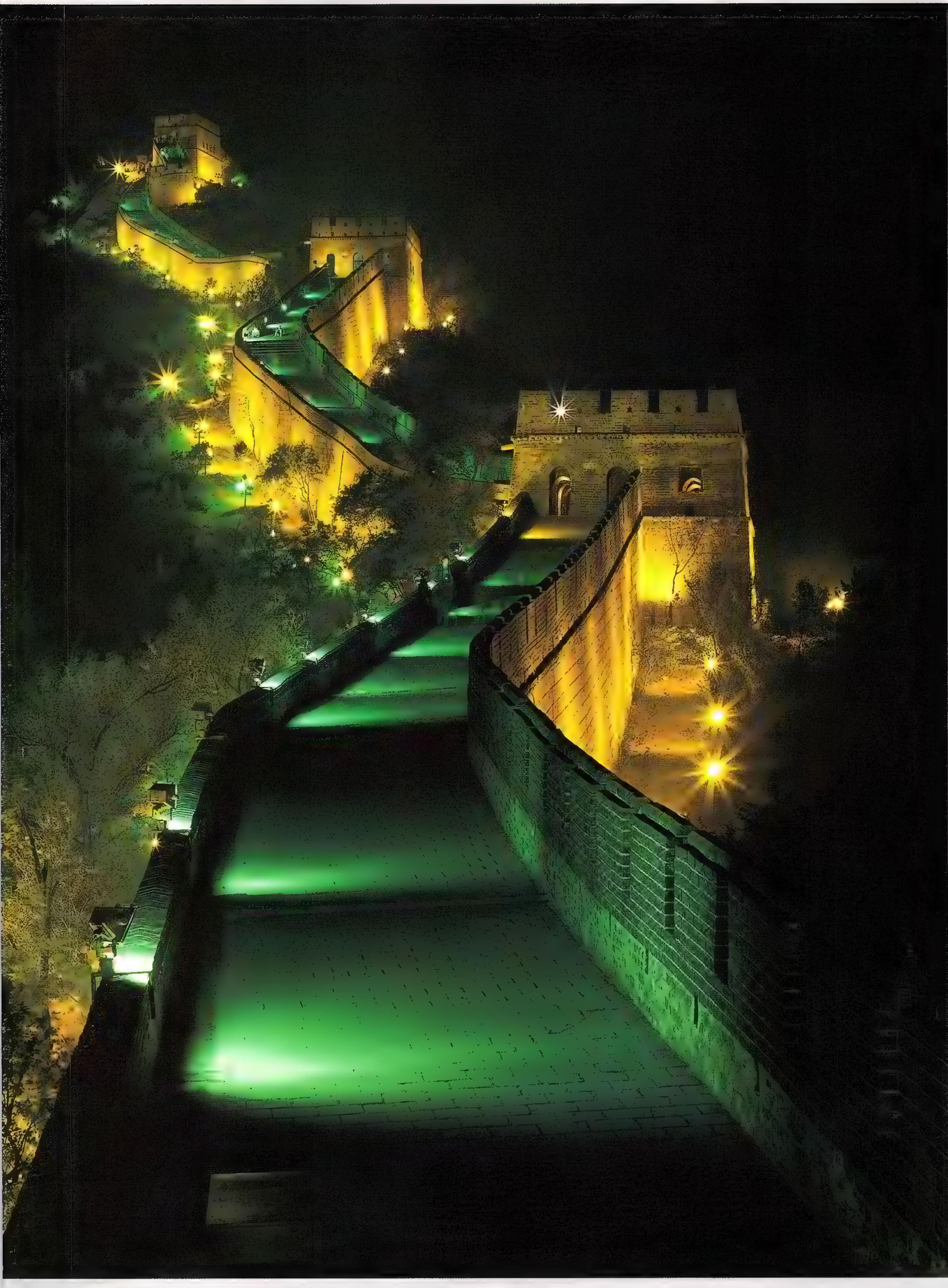
between two sections of the Great Wall, with the southwest edge nestled gently into the mountain while the section in the northeast forms a formidable skyline. I climbed up the mountain along the Great Wall in an easterly direction, past the Zhuangdaokou Pass and over a mountain ridge, and reached the Yellow Flower City. An hour and a half later I climbed a ridge to the north, but the clouds and the hazy light ruled out any possibility for a photographic session.

It was not until dusk that I located a good position to wait for the sunset. At about 7 p.m., a column of golden rays penetrated the dark clouds on the western horizon, and dyed the entire sky crimson. My day's toil had finally paid off.

In the eyes of a photographer, Arrow Nock is the most picturesque at the beginning of the Winter Solstice.

May 26, 1997. Light rain turning cloudy. Wanjinglou

It had been thunderstorms and heavy rain in Beijing since 6 p.m. yesterday. I had got up at



half past four this morning and now two hours later I was already on my way from the long-distance bus station. At 9 a.m. I arrived at Miyun and changed into a minibus bound for Xinchengzi Township; the rain never ceased. At 10:20 a.m. I reached Dabagezhuang Village and began climbing the mountain. By then the rain had stopped, and Wanjinglou and Xiannülou hid behind a thick veil of mist. Hardly had I grasped this most photogenic moment when a wind rose to blow the mist elsewhere.

At 12 noon I arrived at Wanjinglou. The sun shone again and masses of cottony clouds scudded along in the blue sky. I rambled everywhere — along the wall, crossing the Heavenly Bridge, ascending the Sky Ladder — and shot one roll after another. The joy was beyond description, and the frustrations at the beginning of the journey had long been consigned to the remotest corner of my mind. Sunset came without my realising it. The golden sun infiltrated the trees and bushes, throwing shadowy spots and stripes on the grassy mountain slope like a painter splashing colours on a gigantic piece of paper. The scene was really a feast for the eyes.

May 27, 1997. Sunny turning cloudy, with light showers

At four in the morning, the light at the Great Wall at Simatai was indistinctly visible. I struggled somewhat as I set off on another visit to Simatai. At 5:30 a.m. I reached Wanjinglou once again. The day had broken but the sky around me was obliterated by thick clouds, leaving only one tiny blue patch. At a little past six, whiffs of fog began floating in, enveloping Xiannulou entirely. After nine the dark clouds started to disperse, but visibility remained rather poor.

The rain began again, and thunder rumbled overhead. I had supper and returned to the family of a local friend for a chat deep into the night. All the time it rained incessantly.

May 28, 1997. Cloudy and sunny, intermittent showers

My journey this day began at 3 a.m., when I inched my way up a narrow footpath towards the mountain top in the moonlight. At 4:35 a.m. above the eastern horizon a crimson belt arose, while right beneath my feet a vast sea of clouds was surging. I rigged up my photographic equipment as the sun rose behind a thick curtain of clouds, but the most resplendent moment never arrived. The cloudy sea, however, was imposing enough to cheer me up. As the clouds disappeared around 8 a.m., and the Great Wall came into sharp relief, I packed up my equipment and went downhill.

May 29, 1997. Sunny turning cloudy. Fourth Visit to Wanjinglou

The pictures I took yesterday of the cloud sea were not ideal. I decided to try my luck once again at Wanjinglou. I got up half an hour earlier, still feeling the aches and fatigue from the previous day's exertion.

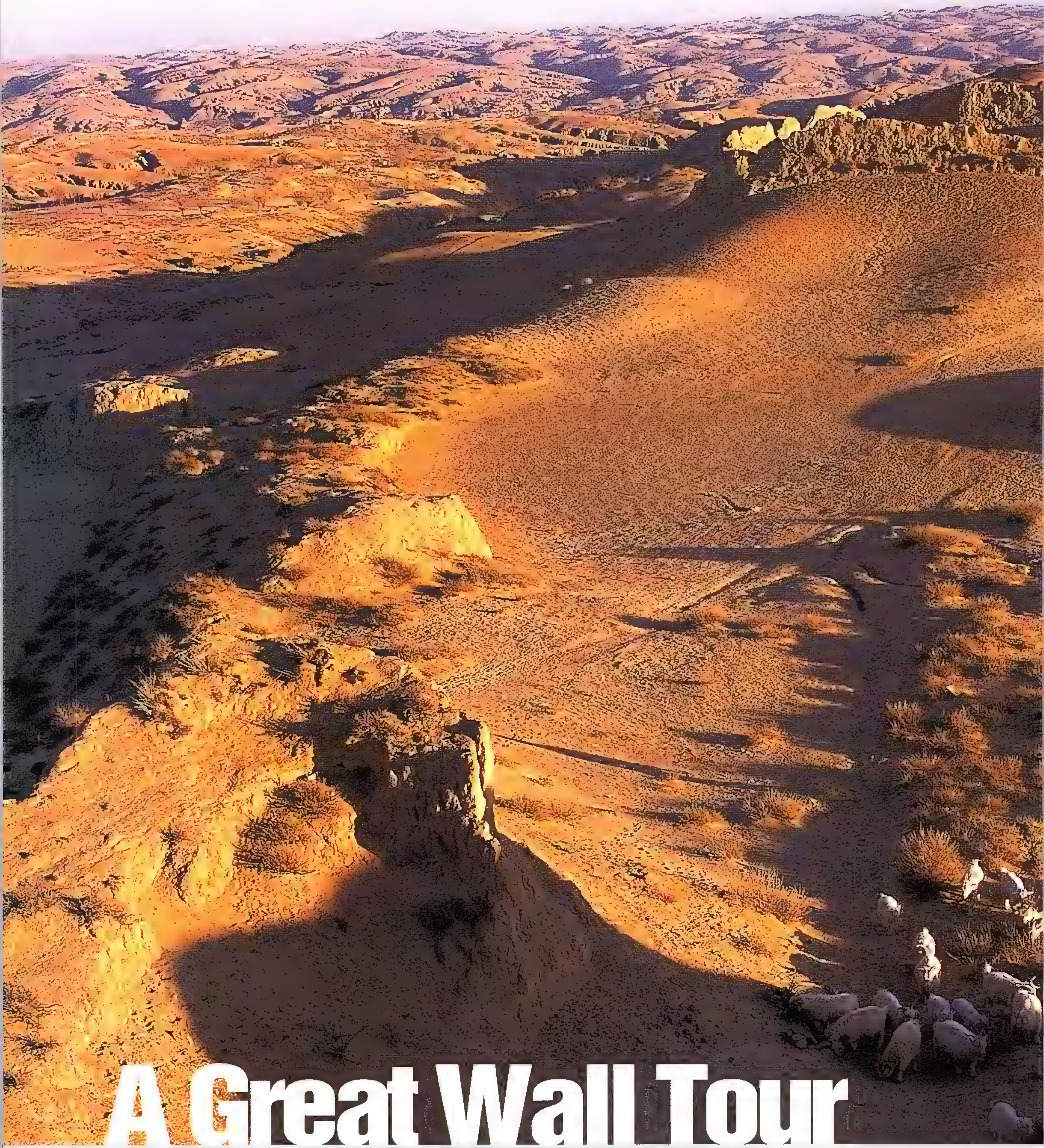
In the moonlight I ascended to Wanjinglou for a fourth time. At 4:58 a.m. the red sun emerged in full splendour, and the Great Wall was dyed a splendid golden hue. A quarter of an hour later as the light lost its brilliance, I packed up my photographic kit, climbed downhill and embarked on my journey home.

Translated by Ling Yuan

Left: As night tours to Badaling become popular, the Great Wall there shines under colourful lights.

Upper right: This section of the Great Wall at Simatai is built on a steep peak and has thus been given the nickname Sky Ladder.

Lower right: Soaring to a height of a thousand metres, Niujijiaobian (Bull's Horn Ridge) provides an evening view of downtown Beijing, a sea of distant shimmering lights reminiscent of a mirage.



A Great Wall Tour

in Northern Shaanxi

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

As history tells us, the Great Wall was built on the orders of Qin Shihuang, the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.). Certain sections of the wall have become famous, but few people know of the Great Wall in northern Shaanxi Province. In fact, this section of the Great Wall was at one time the most important section, and was where Qin Shihuang once ordered the supreme headquarters of the Great Wall construction project to be established. He even built the Qinzhi Road, literally the "Straight Qin Thoroughfare", from Xianyang, the Qin-dynasty capital, to Jiuyuan, and assigned his elder son Fu Su and the famous general Meng Tian to station at Suide with a 300,000-strong army.

The two states of Wei and Zhao in the Warring States period before the Qin, as well as the Qin, Sui and Ming dynasties all made their contributions to the construction of this Shaanxi Great Wall. The most famous is that built in the Qin Dynasty, while the Dabian Wall of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) is the best designed. Due to natural and man-made destruction in the long years that followed, most sections of the Great Wall built in the early dynasties have collapsed and vanished. What tourists generally see now is only the sections built in the Ming Dynasty.

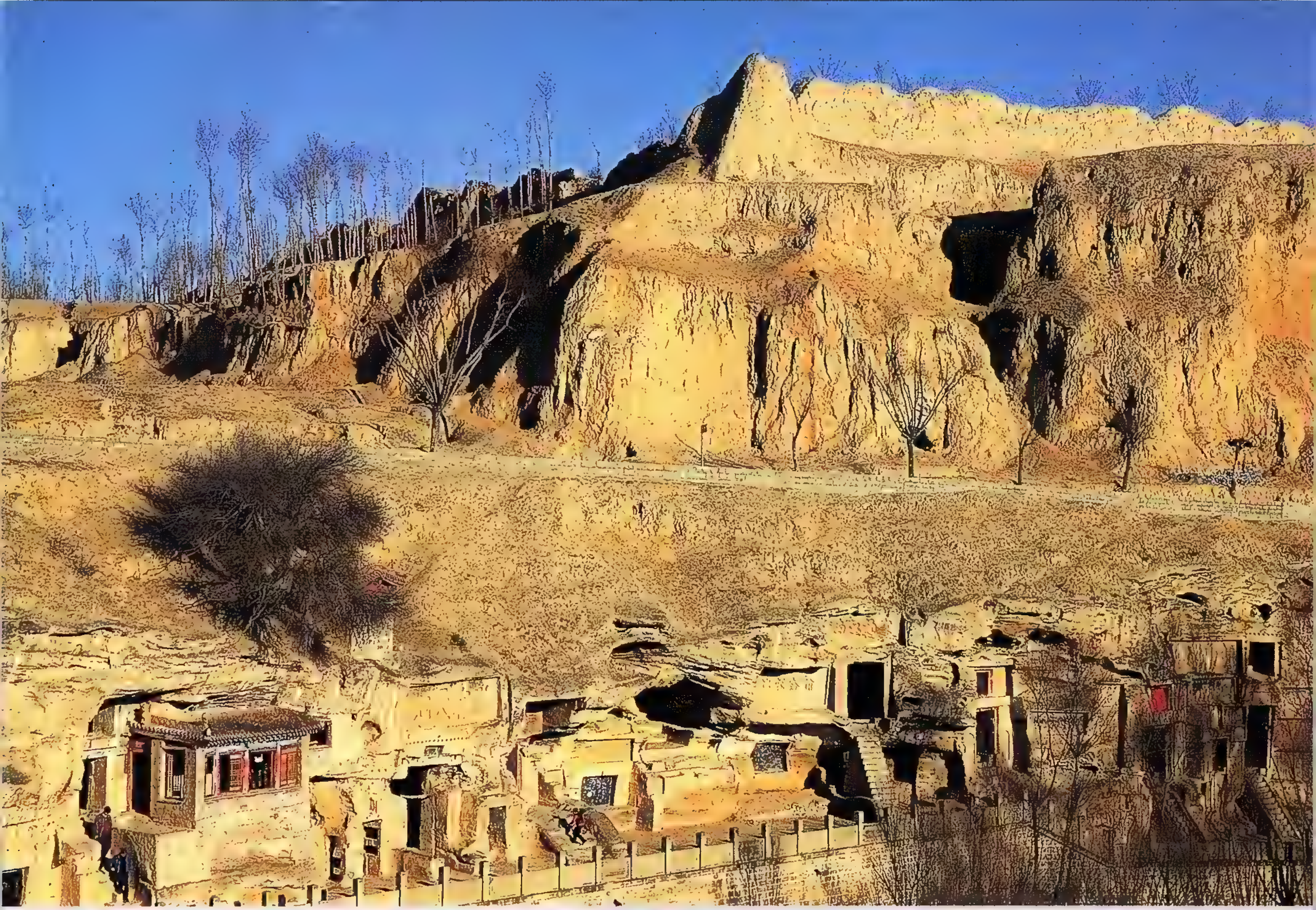
Suide and Yulin: Strategic Headquarters

In the Qin Dynasty, Suide served as the supreme headquarters of the army garrison for the entire Great Wall. In the Ming Dynasty, it also served as one of the nine strategic posts along the Great Wall and the general headquarters of the Yansui Garrison.

In late autumn, I travelled north from Xi'an to Suide. The minute I saw the city, I was deeply impressed. Two rivers flanked the downtown area; the streets bustled with traffic and people; and highways fanned out to link the city with surrounding areas. Perhaps it was the convenient transport that allowed Suide to retain its former splendour and prosperity.

I went around in the city in search of historical relics. In the corner of a school, I saw the tomb of General Meng Tian; despite its location it did not seem out of place. The tomb of Fu Su sits on the top of Diaoyin Hill. In early morning and late afternoon, the sun adds nobility to its lonely atmosphere. The autumn yellow leaves covered the hill but before long the winter snow flakes would whiten it completely.

The Qin army camp has vanished without trace, and the Ming fortresses also have become dilapidated walls. A view from Diaoyin Hill reveals the panorama of Suide: the Dali and Wuding rivers on either side and



Previous page: The magnificent Great Wall and its watchtowers over the mountain ridge by the Wuding River in Hengshan County

Upper: Yimabu by Hongshi Gorge was a market place for trade between the Han people and the Mongolians in the Ming Dynasty.

Lower: Children like to play on the ruins of the Qin-dynasty Great Wall on their way home after school.

four mountain valleys linking it with the outside world. Situated amidst high mountains and near rivers, the city is indeed strategically important and worthy of its reputation as the northern gate of the Qin capital Xianyang.

The simple village of Yulin was later turned into a garrison. In the Ming Dynasty, the headquarters of the Yansui Garrison moved from Suide to Yulin. From that time on it became a major military post in northern China.

When I asked the local people about the reasons for the Yansui Garrison moving its headquarters north from Suide to Yulin, I was told that Suide was 125 kilometres away from the northern frontier and soldiers could not arrive in time during an emergency. In the Ming Dynasty, the Mongolian cavalry frequently harassed the border area, but by the time the Yansui Garrison received the news and sent their troops, the invaders had long fled. Later, Yu Zijun, an official from southern China, took office as commander of the garrison, asked permission to move his headquarters to Yulin to solve this problem.

Mr. Zhang of the Yulin Great Wall Society told me that Yu Zijun not only moved his headquarters to the foot of the Great Wall but had his 40,000 soldiers repair and link up those original sections of the wall to complete a 850-kilometre-long defence work. The wall ran from the banks of the Yellow River in Fugu County in the east to Huamachi in Dingbian County in the west. The rebuilt Great Wall was in full conformity with the topographical features, winding up and down along the mountain ridges and zigzagging through terraces and desert. Also built along the Great Wall were a large number of garrison mounds, fortresses, and beacon towers; these strategically-placed facilities formed a tight and solid defence network. On completion of the project, the Mongolian cavalry reduced their harassment in the Yulin area and began to pay tributes to the Ming court. Moreover, market places were established at this area for trade between the Han people south of the wall and the Mongolians to the north.

Now, Yulin has become a famous historical and cultural city in North China. The famous South Tower and North Terrace are still there, as well as three of the six towers built on the main street. Lining the major north-south street are quaint buildings in Ming and Qing architectural styles. Although the high and wide city walls are somewhat damaged, they still look very solid and the city of Yulin still possesses much of its former magnificence.

According to Mr. Feng, Zhenbeitai, the terrace, which is about 30 metres high and over 5,000 square metres in area, was mainly used to supervise border trade between the Hans and Mongolians at the Hongshan Market below. In ancient times, the Mongolians and the Hans did their trading at Yimabu by the Hongshi Gorge. Listening to Mr. Feng's description, I could visualise the scene: Hans and Mongolians in heated bargaining while outside the city, sand dunes stretched to the horizon like yellow waves, dotted with the tents and carriages of the merchants.

Jian'anbu and Gaojiabu

Jian'anbu is a satellite town of Yulin. The place was abandoned long ago after half of its inhabitants were massacred by bandits. Now, it has turned into a base for film and TV programme production.

To the east of Zhenbeitai, the Great Wall runs in and out of sight, generally parallel with a highway paved with sandy soil. Now and then, there was a small walled village used to be occupied by the ancient frontier soldiers or a beacon tower on top of sand dunes. Mr. Zhang from the City Cultural Relics Administration, who accompanied me on the tour, said that most sections of the Great Wall here were rebuilt according to the Sui Dynasty (581-618) construction. Apart from those sections buried under shifting sand, much was destroyed by the highway construction. To protect the Great Wall and some of its fortresses against damage by the strong wind, the local villagers purposely covered them with sand.

Passing Yushumao, I saw Jian'anbu in distance. Then, from the top of Eastern Hill I found

Upper: A temple in Shaanxi built in a cave dug into the Great Wall
Lower: On the city wall at the east gate of Yulin, people doing morning exercises look like soldiers guarding the gate.

Upper: The bedroom of a cave dwelling at the foot of the Great Wall

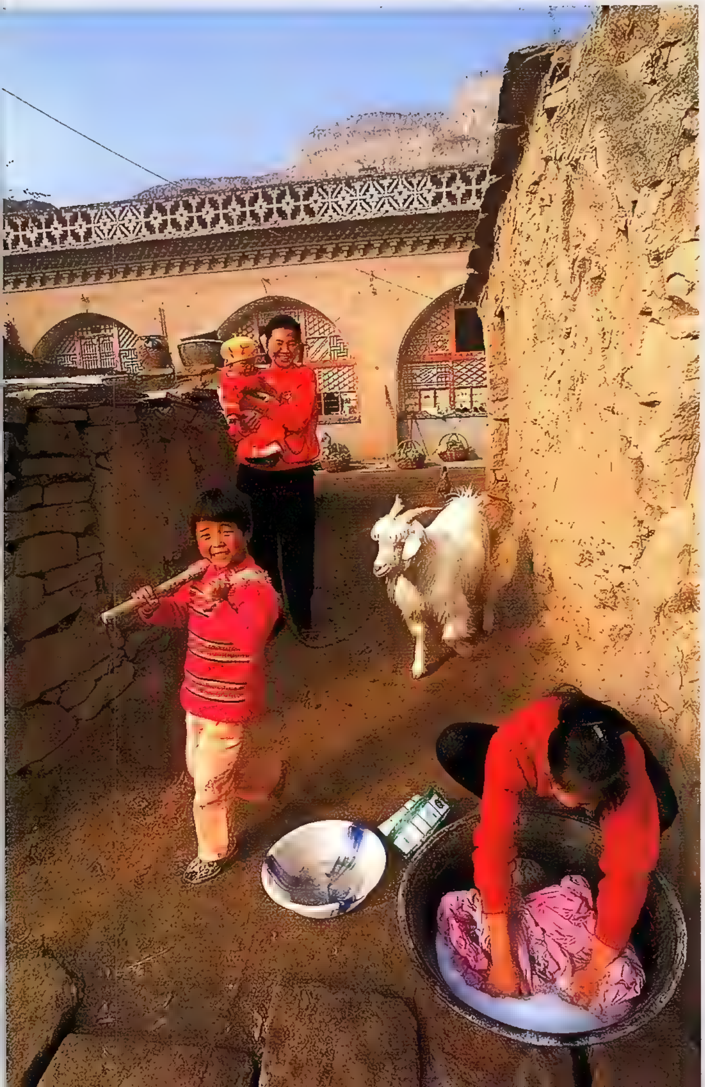
Lower: A cave dwelling dug into the mound of the ancient Great Wall

that most of this enormous and neatly designed walled village had become cultivated land and only a small part on the southern side was inhabited by people.

Mr. Fang Baosheng, head of the village Cultural Relics Protection Group, informed me that the wall bricks were removed by the township government in 1958 to build houses. Otherwise, the walled village would be more imposing. In recent years, film production units from Hong Kong and Shaanxi have come here to film outdoor scenes, bringing in vitality and liveliness to the village. There are not many inhabitants in the village now. An old story may explain why: a man called Zhou Si assembled a group of followers in a revolt against the imperial court. One day, they sneaked into the village at night and killed half of the residents. Only after they heard that a Ming general and his army were stationed in the southern part did they quickly withdraw in fear. Since that time, the population of the village steadily dwindled. Mr. Fang added that if not for the fact that the walls provide an excellent shield against the sandy storms and that the land is fertile, he and his family would have moved their homes elsewhere.

As our bus continued into the Shenmu county seat, I looked back at Erlang Mountain; its stone top was dotted with several elegant temples. In ancient times, Shenmu was one of the three major market places in northern Shaanxi for border trade between the Han people and Mongolians. It is believed it was also the native town of the famous General Yang of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127).

In Shenmu, I was introduced to Mr. Qiao, chairman of the Shenmu Great Wall Society and a veteran approaching 80 years of age. After the formalities, he ushered me out of the town for a visit to beacon towers they had rebuilt. Although he was thin and weak, his spirit suddenly returned and his eyes beamed whenever the Great Wall was discussed.



The beacon towers were rebuilt with local donations, he said. The bricks used were specially produced strictly according to requirements as in the Ming Dynasty. Of all the rebuilt towers, the biggest one was the Shihuozi Beacon Tower. Under it there was a small Great Wall Museum. Standing on top of the tower, I could get a clear idea of the direction of the Great Wall as well as the topographic features all around.

After Shenmu, I went to the ancient Linzhou City, 20 kilometres away to the Northeast. It is a pity that the ancient city had long vanished; all I could do was try to visualise the scenes according to Mr. Qiao's description.

On our way back, we visited the ruins of Mashibu by the Kuye River. Pointing at the sandy dunes across the river, Mr. Qiao explained, "In the Ming Dynasty, whenever a market day came for trade between the Han and Mongolian people, all forms of tents would be scattered all over the dunes. Herds of camels and horses came and went continuously." He suggested that, if I found it difficult to visualise such a prosperous scene, I could go south to the Gaojiabu for some real experiences.

Taking his advice, I went to Gaojiabu, which is on the eastern bank of Tuwei River. In terms of overall layout, Gaojiabu is the best preserved ancient walled village in northern Shaanxi. My first glance took me by surprise. The lower part, up to the height of three to four metres, of the well-preserved walls was built with gigantic pieces of granite, while the upper part was built with blue bricks. The walls looked exceptionally solid. The view inside the village left me with a deeper impression. Across the main street running east to west were three meticulously designed arched gates and all along were many ancient buildings with carved beams and painted rafters. Another street to the south was lined with shops and stores in traditional style. Zhongxing Tower, a structure built in the Ming Dynasty with red frames and a yellow roof, stood astride the street, providing an eye-catching view. Around the walled village were sheer hills, with temple buildings dotted here and there.

Walking around, I found all the inhabitants had used the village walls as the back walls of their houses. Some even opened windows over them. Although the earth used to fill up the walls were removed, the stones and bricks were preserved.

The next day was a market day. People came, with their animals or local products, from all directions. After they sold these animals and bought other goods they needed, they packed onto buses and went home. The streets were tightly crowded with people, and the sound of hawking and bargaining could be heard everywhere. I took some pictures of this vibrant scene, but when I aimed my camera at a typical northern Shaanxi man who was selling sheep, he waved his hand indicating his refusal to have his picture taken. However, he did not stop bargaining with the potential buyer in the traditional way — making the offer and counter-offer with his fingers hidden in a long, wide sleeve.

Huangfubu and Baichengzi: Solid Northern Strongholds

Huangfubu is the first walled village on the east end of the Great Wall in northern Shaanxi, and the sections of the Great Wall under its jurisdiction are linked up with the Yellow River at Qiangtou Village.

I went to the town of Fugu. There, I paid homage at the Qixing (Seven-Star) Temple, which became famous for the wedding of Yang Ye, a gallant Song general who fought against the Liao. Built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and rebuilt in the Ming Dynasty, the temple is a unique architecture of bricks without beams, still looking solid and new.

I travelled by bus along a highway paved with local red clay through red mountain valleys. From the Zhuanjiaolou (Corner Tower) to Mazhen and then to the banks of the Yellow River, the Great Wall runs along mountain ridges like a flying rainbow. The part of the Great Wall linking the Yellow River has collapsed and has been pounded by the water into a pointed cliff. Hence the local people call it Jian'erdun (Pointed Mound). Because the section of the wall from there down to the south was considered an important river defence work, the reason for the numerous beacon towers and watchtowers was obvious.

At Qiangtou Village, one could actually touch the water of the Yellow River. The Great Wall running along the left bank of the river, however, has mostly collapsed. Those sections that still stand have again been used by the local people as the back walls of their houses. Across the river, the wall in Hequ County of Shanxi Province, still stands impregnably on high cliffs.

On my way back from the banks of the Yellow River, I again passed Huangfubu. Against the setting sun, the fortress tower looked like it was in flames. From the top of the village wall I felt the wind howling like battle horns. Looking at the vast and flat Huangfu plain, the scene of battles between the Ming army and the Mongolian cavalry easily came to mind.

Running along the southern edge of the Mu Us Desert and along the left bank of the Wuding River, the Dabian section of the Great Wall, like a gigantic yellow dragon, rolls in an endless sea of sand. Every few thousand metres, a beacon tower or watchtower was built — like a small island in the vast sea. Mr. Feng from the county government told me, "The Great

Upper: A beacon tower of the Great Wall near Mazhen in Fugu County which used to serve as both a defence position and a watchtower.
Lower: Ruins of the Great Wall in dusk

Wall here was built by ramming local sandy earth with layers of willow twigs." And indeed on closer observation I could easily see rows of the dried ends of willow twigs in the wall.

What surprised me even more were the sheep grazing on the naked yellow sandy land inside and outside the Great Wall. To my eyes, there was virtually no grass. Yet, the sheep could still find something to eat and survive. Their vitality is just as strong as that of their masters.

Tongwan was once the capital of the Xia Kingdom, build by a Hun chieftain in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420). More than 600 years later, the Northern Song court sent people to destroy it, fearing that the Dangxiang (a minority ethnic group which founded the Xia Dynasty) people would grow strong enough to become its rival. As the clay used to build the city was white, it has been commonly known as Baichengzi (White City).

The afternoon I arrived at Jingbian, I immediately drove 80 kilometres north into endless desert to visit the ruins of the capital left by the once mighty Xia Kingdom. There, row upon row of white walls stubbornly stood; although they were the ruins of an ancient city, the walls were exceptionally hard. I hit the wall forcefully with a piece of rock, but only a faint white mark appeared. My hand, however, turned numb. The northern wind had unfortunately proved its force though. Over the years, the side of the wall facing the north had been cut into a beehive.

Now living alone in a cave dwelling among the ruins was an old man named Ma. Very earnestly, he told me, "People say that the chieftain of the Huns had this city built in five years with 100,000 people. All the clay used to build the city was first steamed, then mixed with rice soup and animal blood, and finally rammed into the walls. It is said the general who supervised over the construction project stipulated that whenever a section was completed, a nail would be used to test its hardness. If the nail could not be hit in, the builders would be rewarded. If the nail went into the wall by one inch, those who were responsible would be killed and their corpses rammed into the wall. Moreover, the poor quality section would be pulled down and rebuilt. Perhaps that is why the Baichengzi could stand strong in the desert for more than 1,500

Upper left: People who make their homes in the Great Wall
Lower: Beacon towers on the banks of the Yellow River in Shaanxi (by Liu Shali)
Upper right : Ancient walls and new life
Middle right: A household at the foot of the Great Wall

years!" His story sent cold shivers down my back.

Dingbian: Western Fortress with Cave Homes

Literally, Dingbian means "peace on the border". It is one of so-called three "bian" (border) in northern Shaanxi (the other two are Anbian and Jingbian). Dingbian is also known for the three treasures it produces — salt, fur and licorice root.

At the ancient Zhenjing town in Jingbian County, the Great Wall turns south. In the east side of Anbian, it runs down from the mountains into the flat sandy plain again and from there west in parallel with the Wuding-Dingbian Highway. After the Dingbianying (Dingbian Camp), it turns northwest to reach Huamachi.

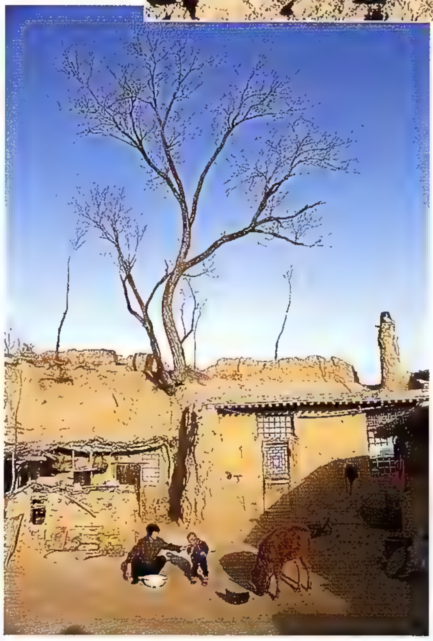
Yanchangbu (Salt-Pan Village) in Huamachi is the west end of the northern Shaanxi Great Wall. Moreover, it was the only place where salt was produced in northern Shaanxi. In the early 1940s, soldiers of the 359th Brigade of the Eight Route Army were sent there for salt. The more than 100 caves dug into the Great Wall by the soldiers now look like a row of small eyes over the alkaline land.

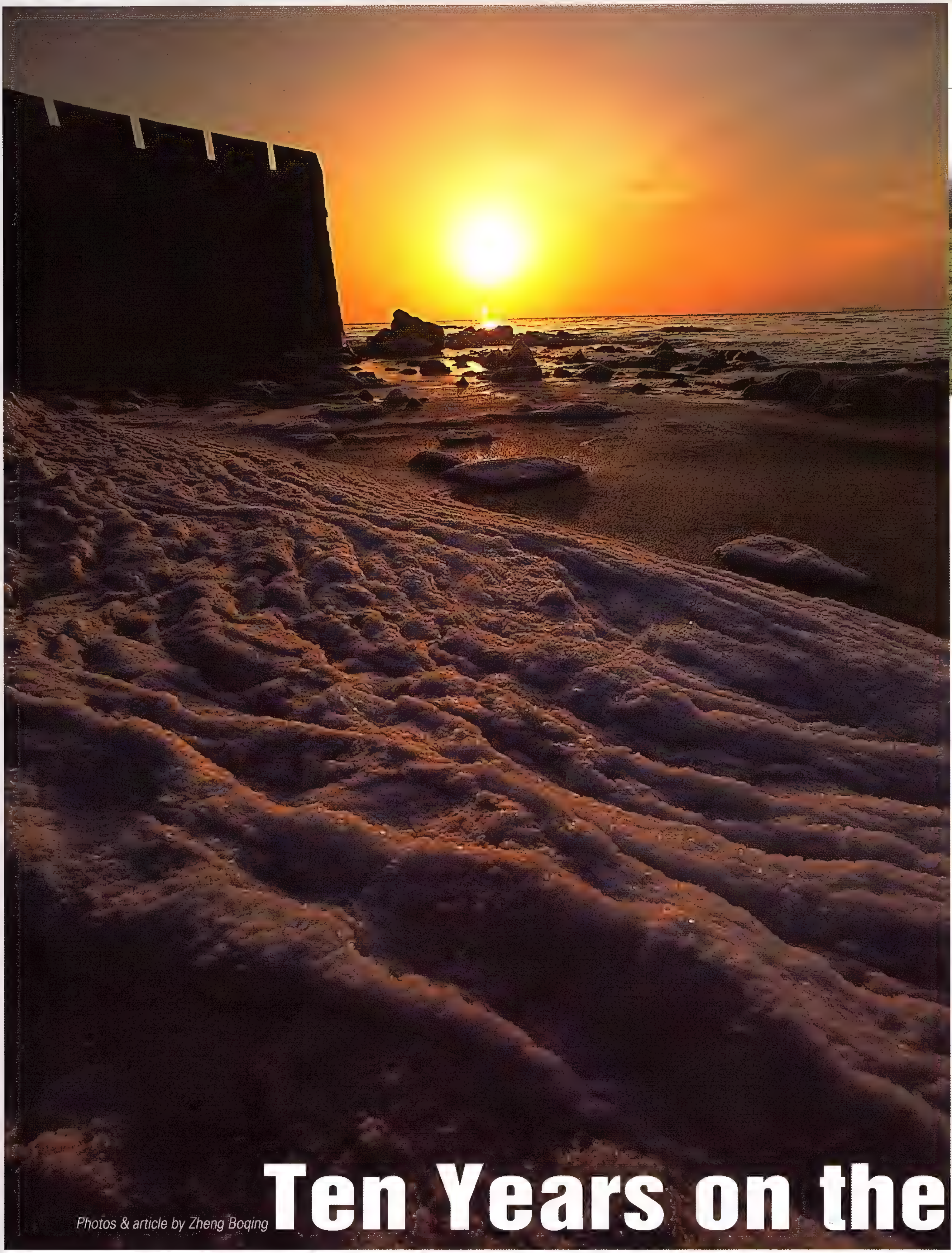
Zhuanjingbu on the border between Dingbian and Anbian was so large in scale that vast fields have been included in the walled village. Here a family surnamed Xue lived in five caves dug into the body of the Great Wall, and the blue bricks used to build up the cave front were obviously fetched from the village walls. When asked why they chose to live inside the Great Wall, the master replied, "The earth was firmly rammed and does not collapse easily."

Wulidun, a beacon tower, was the largest and best preserved earth mound of the Great Wall in northern Shaanxi. The high mound is surrounded by earthen walls, which make it resemble a small fort. Together with the sandy waves to its west, the landscape is indeed striking.

The setting sun once again bathed the Great Wall in red hues. Times like this made me want to set up a beacon fire to call back the battle scenes of bygone days.

Translated by Li Zhenguo





Ten Years on the

Photos & article by Zheng Boqing

6,000-Kilometre Great Wall

Left: Laolongtou at Shanhaiguan appears as a spirited warrior demonstrating his mighty and invincible power.

Above : The couple surveyed the Great Wall in Hebei, Shanxi and Inner Mongolia by bicycle.

Editor's Note

Zheng Boqing and his wife Kang Lirong, a Shanghai-based couple, have linked their lives with the Great Wall. For 10 years, with immense enthusiasm and unswerving determination, they travelled through the 6,000-kilometre Great Wall from Shanhaiguan to Jiayuguan, climbing arduous precipices, traversing the formidable desert and enduring unspeakable hardships, only to take pictures of the splendour as well as the ruins of this world-famous wonder. Through the camera, they have captured the instantaneous charm of the Great Wall and turned it into eternity.

Now, let's share their invaluable experience and admire the gorgeous works of art of this couple.

I remember, when I was a child, the first historical story my father told me was "The First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty Built the Great Wall", and the first local opera I saw was *Meng Jiangnü Cries over the Great Wall.* Ever since then, the 6,000-kilometre-long Great Wall in northern China had come into my dreams, and it had become a fantastic temptation. I not only wanted to climb the Great Wall as a "real man", but also dreamed to walk over its old walls, beacon towers, battlements, and watchtowers on foot, with my camera ready to depict its picturesque scenes. But when I told my wife of my plans, she asked: "Are you dreaming?" Certainly I knew it was a 6,000-kilometre-long road — surmounting lofty ridges and towering mountains, walking through the desert and wilderness! Finally, my insistence impressed her, and moreover she decided to accompany me on the journey.

Starting in 1985 we began our journey along the Great Wall and my dream came true.

A Long Way

In 10 full years, we travelled the entire 6,000 kilometres of the Great Wall from Shanhaiguan in the east to Jiayuguan at the western end, zigzagging northward and westward. On a tight budget and always thinking of photographic opportunities, we had to live like the villagers along the Great Wall, and naturally at times conditions were difficult. We rode bicycles westward along the Outer Great Wall at the boundary of Shanxi and Inner Mongolia, walked on the old Great Wall in Hebei, Shanxi and Gansu provinces, and travelled by camel, experiencing all sorts of hardships. We sat around fires with local herdsmen and merchants, chatting about daily life and legends. Most times, we slept in camps on wild mountains and barely saw a soul for several hundred kilometres. Often we had nothing to eat or to drink. I guess in many ways, we were travelling as our ancestors did in the old days. Through our travels we got to know the Great Wall, to read the wordless books of history, and to feel the pulse of emotions surrounding it. We became the son and daughter of the Great Wall, feeling the warmth of the "mother", and taking photos for her.

Our travel along the Great Wall has not only provided us with endless materials for photo creation, but also enriched our knowledge. Searching for the source of the national art in the treasure-house of the Great Wall, we obtained a better understanding of the mystery of the traditional Chinese art, and the history and multiple cultures that the Great Wall had witnessed.

Photographic journalism along the Great Wall was not a tourist trip, nor a hunt for novelty; it was more like direct contact with the art itself. When we were riding on camels, holding cameras stained with sand, or when we were waiting for daybreak on a cold night, I hoped that when these photos were displayed and appreciated, the audience would realise that: "Only a great nation could build such a magnificent Great Wall."

Dawn over Laolongtou

Laolongtou is the eastern terminal of the Ming-dynasty Great Wall which connects with the sea. In ancient times, people regarded the Great Wall as a long dragon winding over mountain ranges, and this terminal was regarded as the head of the dragon, hence its name, Old Dragon Head. Here, the sea and the Great Wall form a scene unique in the world: the Great Wall, the sea, the sun, the waves and the billowing sounds merge to create a magnificent view which attracts numerous photographers.

It was the 28th day of the 12th lunar month when we arrived at Laolongtou. That day it was cloudy, and the sea wind pounded waves against the hard granite wall of the fortress, making thunderous sounds. We stood by the sea for a long time, lost in sentimental thought.

At three o'clock the next morning, we walked all the way from the pass, Shanhaiguan, to

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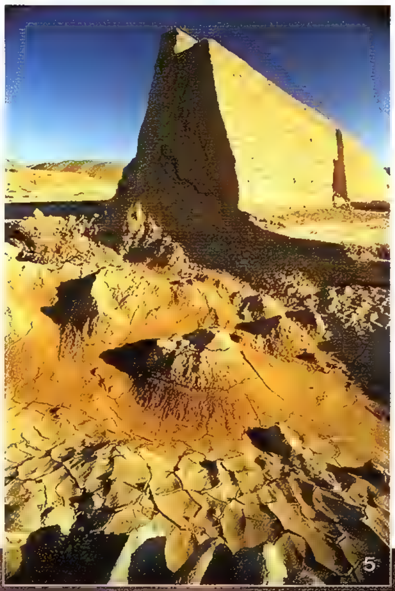
the seaside of the Old Dragon Head. The bitter cold wind, bringing sea spray with it, hit us hard. The sky was still covered with dark clouds, but we did not give up, because an imagined picture — The Dawn over Laolongtou — was inspiring us. On the fourth day, we hurried to the seaside again. At 5:30 a.m. in the morning we had already set up our tripods waiting for daybreak. The wind was much stronger than before, and the sea water on the beach had become white frost. At 6:20, the clouds in the east sky dispersed, and the sea was dyed red. A morning sun was rising from the sea surface with red and golden clouds all around. At that time, Laolongtou looked like a strong warrior, showing its extraordinary dignity and strength. We lost no time pressing the shutters of our cameras.

The beauty of the Great Wall was created by the ancestors of the Chinese people with their sweat and wisdom, but nature in the form of sunshine, colourful clouds, rain and even thunder and lighting add to its elegance. It symbolises the Chinese nation — its history, culture, lifestyle and spirit through thousands of years.

Chilly Wind over Hexi Corridor

In the winter of 1992, we were going through the Hexi Corridor in Northwest China's Gansu Province. The snowy peaks of Qilian Mountains looked holy and pure towering aloft in the sky. The old Great Wall, in many broken sections, lay at the foot of the Qilian Mountains, on



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the vast expanse of desert. At that time, the temperature was -20 °C, and the north wind arose strongly, blowing the snow up off the ground. For us, who had been travelling half a month in the desert, to carry photographic equipment weighing 15 kilograms on our shoulders and to walk in the knee-deep snow was really a great challenge. We felt weak in both arms and legs, had difficulties breathing, and our ears were ringing. We were exhausted, but our desire for victory and for life drove us to struggle towards the next beacon tower.

However, it became very quiet at sunset. The last rays of the sun were like countless golden arms hugging the Qilian Mountains and the Great Wall together. We held our breath and enjoyed this wonderful view through the windows of our cameras.

But unfortunately we were both frost-bitten after that trip, and lost the feeling in our legs for three months.

On New Year's Eve

In our efforts to take photos of the Great Wall, we had not celebrated New Year's Eve at home for 10 years. Every New Year's Eve when families feasted together and enjoyed the evening before the new year, we were climbing the Great Wall in bitter wind. We missed our parents and daughter and ate only frozen buns with mouthfuls of snow. The food and snow were chilling, but our hearts were warm, and full of passion.

On the 1993 New Year's Eve, we were on the Jinshanling Great Wall in Luanping of Hebei Province, where we met Mr. Zhang Baosheng, a farmer of Hualougou Village who invited us to his home for dinner. His was a very simple and small, tiled house typical in the mountainous area of North China. There was no TV, but only a radio made in the 1960s-70s broadcasting the CCTV's New Year's Eve entertainment party. We joined the dozen or so of the family members sitting around on the brick-bed. The New Year's Eve meal was simple and the food was served in wash basins with the steaming-hot dumplings as the main dish. For them it was probably the best food of the year. Our host poured liquor for us, made a toast and drank a full cup in one mouthful. As a courtesy, we did the same although we had never drunk liquor before. Unprepared, we had to drink with each of the whole family who proposed toasts to us one by one; we each drank about 10 cups!

After we dragged ourselves back to our tent, we looked at the dark sky but could not go to sleep. It was a New Year's Eve I would never forget for my whole life. The farmers in northern China are simple and honest folks just like the bricks on the Great Wall. It was these numerous ordinary but unique bricks which formed this great wonder of the world.

Test in a Sand Storm

Another evening on the great desert came. Dark clouds gathered in the sky and night fell even before sunset. A strong whirlwind suddenly rose from the depths of the desert. It came so swiftly that we were not prepared at all. We were blown onto the ground, together with our heavy tripods and cameras. As the wind drove large grains of sand onto my head and body, I

1. **The ruins lie quietly on the horizon, full of the past memories.**
2. **Yumen Pass in the westernmost section of the Great Wall used to be a battlefield in ancient China.**
3. **Are the ruins of an ancient city in Turpan, Xinjiang, traces of the western extension of the Great Wall?**
4. **Beacon towers on the Jinshanling Great Wall in Hebei Province**
5. **The Heishan Great Wall in Gansu Province still stands solidly today.**
6. **Fortifications at Yumen Pass facing a severe test by the coming sand storm**
7. **After a storm, the sun throws its great energy on the beacon towers and walls at Dunhuang in Gansu Province.**

Upper : Standing at the foot of the Great Wall at Jiayuguan, we felt ourselves very small.

Lower : Camping at the foot of Wulonggou Great Wall in Laiyuan County, Hebei Province

tried but could not get up. The sand storm wind became stronger and the bean-sized raindrops hit us like icy knives. Holding our cameras, we found a broken wall and hid ourselves behind it. About two hours later, the wind was still howling across the desert, seemingly unstoppable. I realised that if we waited there for the storm to end we would die of cold, so we finally ran back to the earthen walls where we had left our bags and set up our tent.

The wind stopped at dawn. The air became extremely fresh and clear, but dark clouds still hung over the whole land. Soon the clouds split in the eastern horizon, and the sun sent its golden rays over the desert. Without thinking, we fetched our cameras and tripods, and aimed against the split in the eastern sky. The grey clouds, the red sun rays, the yellow fortification — a wonderful combination of colours. It was the first time I saw such a scene in my life as a photographer. I watched and watched while tears came into my eyes again. Through my tears, I saw the sun was radiating with a spectrum of seven colours, forming many rainbows among the beacon towers on the Great Wall. The beacon towers and the walls themselves looked as if they were rising from the horizon and the vast desert. The sun's rays surged as giant waves upon the Great Wall, like an emotional outburst.

Out of Yumen Pass in the West

When Yumen Pass is mentioned, it immediately reminds people of the "Poem of Liangzhou" composed by a Tang-dynasty poet, Wang Zhihuan, who vividly describes the wilderness of Yumen Pass. The poetry verse "Spring winds never blow across Yumen Pass" has become a masterpiece of Chinese poetry.

To get to Yumen Pass, however, we must take the ancient Silk Road from Anxi to the west of Hexi Corridor and cover 200-300 kilometres. Along the road is all desert, without any human inhabitants. Not yet having been to Yumen Pass, we did not regard ourselves as real Great Wall climbers. Without photos of this magnificent pass our Great Wall photographic survey would not be complete. So in the summer of 1997, we arrived at Anxi and set off from there to Yumen Pass.

The Silk Road is actually not a physical road in this vast desert. The sun hung high in the sky, white clouds floated by like ships in its vast sea of blue. The desert was another type of vast sea and we were like ants crawling on the yellow sand.

Above: Travelling by camel in Hexi Corridor along the Ming Great Wall in 1989

Everywhere it was the colour of yellow, with only occasional dots of green land appearing. Everyday the sun baked every inch of this land for over 12 hours. After a couple of days, we were both sunburned, and our skin was covered with bean-sized blisters; we were also very dirty and thirsty. Sometimes we felt dizzy with the burning sun overhead and sometimes we found ourselves lost in the vast desert. However the beacon towers on the Great Wall always directed us like beacons on the sea guiding ships.

Ever since we entered the desert and came close to the Han-dynasty Great Wall, we had been deeply impressed by this vast land extending around the Great Wall; we became obsessed with its unique features, and sighed with emotion at its magnificence. Who could imagine that here used to be a battlefield as well as the gate of ancient China leading to the west? Now on this barren desert, with the passing years, lie the ruins of the Great Wall, a valuable record of Chinese history.

A Dream in a Beacon Tower

Beacon towers were built on the Great Wall for lighting fires or sending smoke signals as warnings to the headquarters, and they were important parts of the Great Wall. Totalling tens of thousands in number, beacon towers are regarded as the symbol of the Great Wall.

During the 10 years of travelling along the Great Wall, we passed beacon towers and watchtowers one after another. Every evening when night fell, we propped up our tent and set a fire in one of such shelters. We spent long nights that were often hard to bear. Living in the wilderness was difficult and dangerous. For safety, we slept in turn and kept a vigilant watch on the surroundings. If we found something suspicious, we could defend ourselves with our simple weapons — cigarette lighter, knife, tripod, and flash. The flash was especially useful; its continuous, bright light frightened the animals who came close to us. Of course, we often mistook running rabbits as wolves in false alarms. Often we did not dare sleep deeply and talked to the silent Great Wall with the stars and moon beaming in the sky. Yes, over those 10 years, we experienced all kinds of hardships and loneliness. Yet we have been rewarded with photos of the best scenes of this long Great Wall. For this, we have given up everything: money, material life, and even the responsibility of looking after our parents and child.

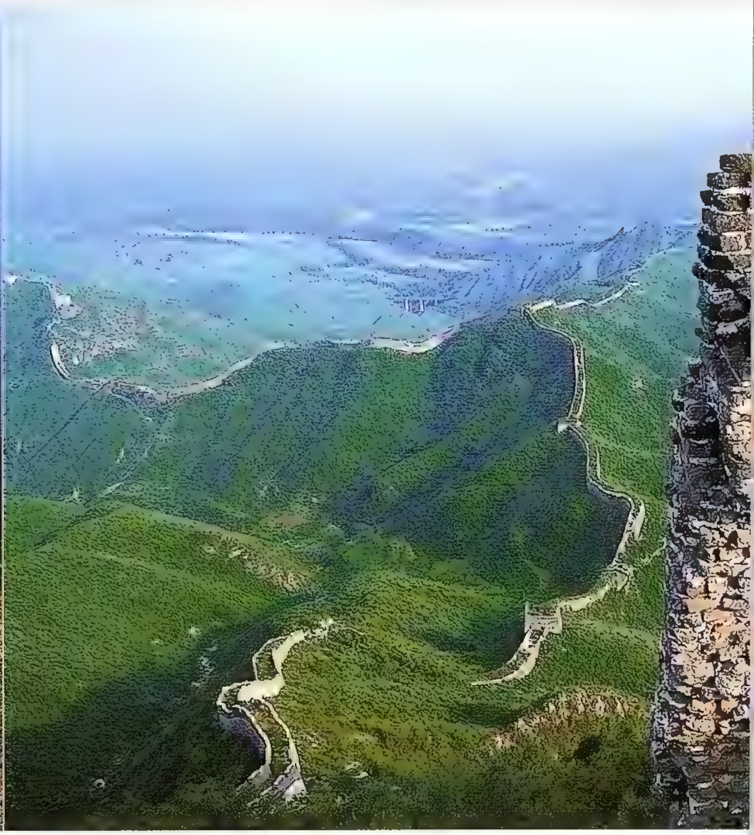
The 10 years we spent travelling along the Great Wall were the years when our old sick parents needed care. But we said goodbye to them time and again, each time being apart for several months without contact. When we got home from Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province in the Summer of 1991, we found my father had died 10 days earlier. The only thing I could do was to spread the sack of yellow earth from the Great Wall on his grave, bringing the Great Wall to him. We will never forget the sacrifices our parents made for us. We left home in the summer of 1994; a fortnight later, in the westernmost beacon tower on the Great Wall at the foot of the Qilian Mountains, I had a dream that my mother asked me to come home quickly. But when I hurried home, I found I was too late already. Three years later, when my Great Wall photo album was published, I presented a copy to my mother, setting it by her portrait.

Unforgettable Memories

Can one freeze time at a particular moment of fascination in one's life? If it were possible, we would like to stay with the Great Wall forever, to look for the most poetic results of light and shadows, and to search for the perfect dream and artistic realm. But we finally had to come back to the noisy city, into an unpredictable future. What sustains our excitement though, is that our feelings of intoxication and wonder have been turned into a photo album which we will cherish forever.

Although we may not walk along the Great Wall again in our lifetime, the profound feelings we have for the Great Wall will last forever.

Translated by M. Q.



Tips for the Traveller

The Great Wall built during the Ming Dynasty is a major tourist attraction due to its continuity and unusual magnificence, but not all the sections of the Great Wall are easy to access. Sections open to tourists are divided into national, provincial and local levels.

National-level Scenic Sections:

•Jiayuguan — the Fortification Under Heaven Situated in a ravine between the Wenshu Peak of the Qilian Mountains and the Heishan Peak of the Heli Mountains in Gansu Province, Jiayuguan stands with the snow-mantled Qilian Mountains in the south and the vast desert to the north. In Lanzhou, capital of Gansu Province, visitors can go directly to Jiayuguan by either a Xinjiang-bound train or a long-distance bus. Most visitors choose to go to Dunhuang first and stop by Jiayuguan on their return journey.

•Simatai — the Most Precarious Section of the Great Wall Protruding from the brow of a menacing cliff on Beijing's northeast boundary with Hebei Province, the Simatai section resembles the flowing mane of a galloping horse. Simatai is a typical structure of this immense defence work with fortresses and watchtowers built on the wall. You may catch a long-distance bus at the Dongzhimen Long-distance Bus Station to Miyun, then to another bound for Dongzhuanghe, from where you can get transport to Simatai.

•Juyongguan and Badaling — No. 1 Fortification of the Great Wall Poised at the northern entrance to the Juyongguan Gully in Yanqing County on Beijing's outskirts, Badaling is regarded as an important landmark of Beijing and the number one tourist attraction on the Great Wall. To visit Badaling, take a train at the Xizhimen Railway Station or the long-distance bus at the Beijiao Market Terminal to the north of Deshengmen. Most visitors prefer a one-day tour programme centred on a visit to Badaling.

•Shanhaiguan — No. 1 Pass Under Heaven Shanhaiguan is the most important stronghold on the eastern end of the Ming-dynasty Great Wall, with the Yanshan Mountains behind it and the sea in front. The mighty Great Wall stretches eastward from the pass before disappearing into the sea, generating the feeling that heaven meets its end right here. A trip to Shanhaiguan from Beijing is extremely convenient by either bus or train, and it is usually included in tourist programmes sponsored by major hotels in Beijing.

Provincial-level Scenic Sections:

Guyuan Town in Ningxia: Go there by bus from Tianshui or Yinchuan, or by train from Baoji in Shaanxi Province; Hongshi (Red Stone) Gorge and Zhenbei Terrace at Yulin, Shaanxi Province: Fly or drive to Yulin from Xi'an, and go to both places by bus; Pingxingguan in Shanxi Province: Go to Taiyuan, and take the public bus directly there; Jiumenkou in Liaoning Province: Go to Shanhaiguan first and catch a bus to go there; Jinshanling (Gubeikou) in Hebei Province: Take the train from Beijing to the Gubeikou station, and then take a walk there; Huangyaguan in Tianjin: Take a bus from Tianjin to Jixian, where minibuses are ready to take you there; Mutianyu in Beijing: Take the long-distance bus from Dongzhimen in Beijing to Huairou. In tourist seasons there are direct routes leading to the site.

Local-level Scenic Sections:

Yanmenguan (including Temple of Yang Ye) in Daixian County, Shanxi Province; Niangzi (Women's) Pass in Pingding County, Shanxi Province; Great Wall Battlement in Beizhen County, Liaoning Province; Yiyuankou in Funing County, Hebei Province; and Yellow Flower City in Huairou County, Beijing.

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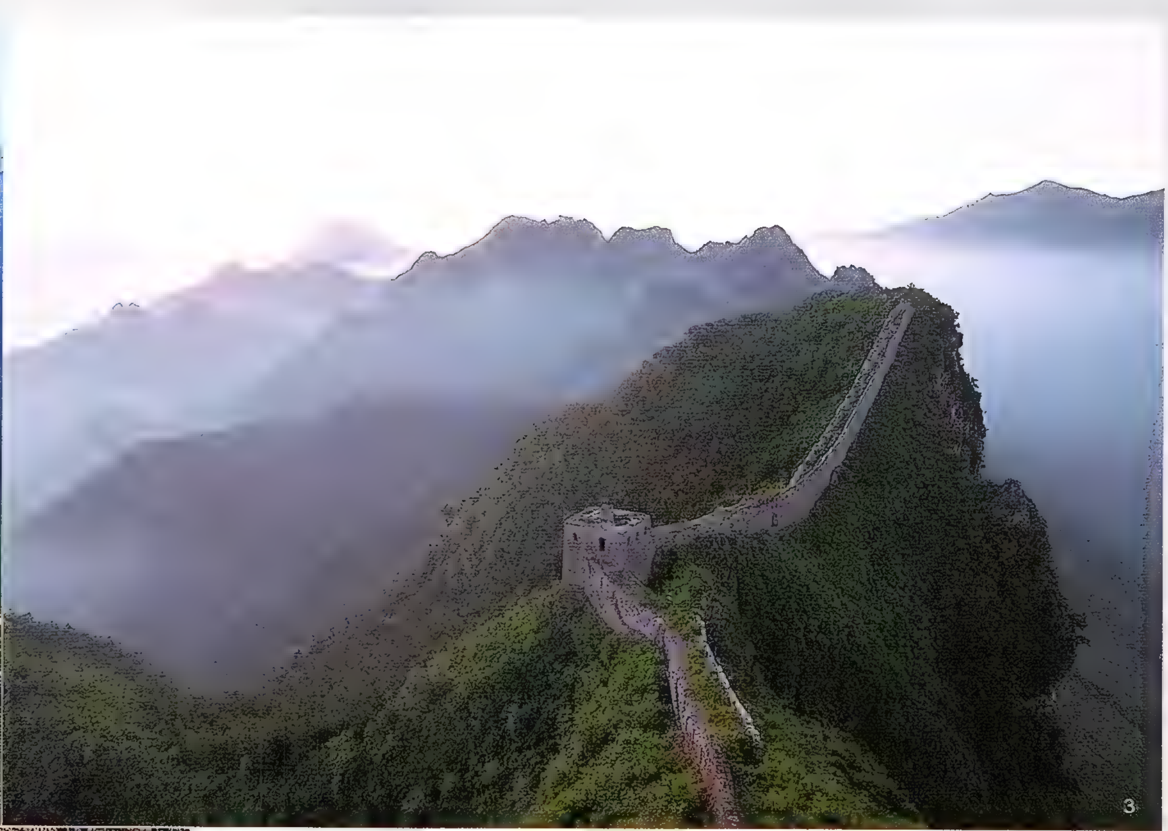

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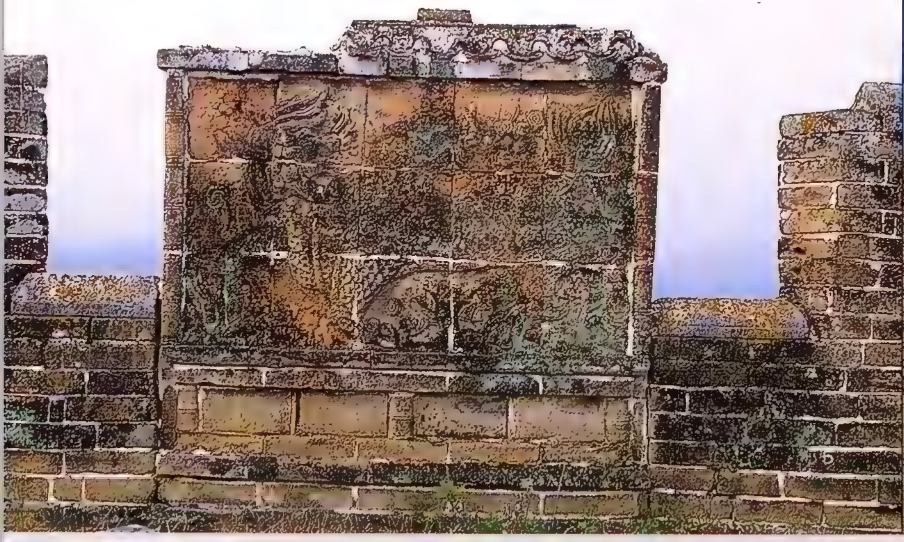
1. A single wall beside Xiannülou (Angel's Tower) at Simatai (by Zhai Dongfeng)
2. Ruins demonstrating the long history of the Great Wall (by Liu Shali)
3. A watchtower flanked with walls in the morning mists (by Liu Shali)
4. Bricks engraved with characters on the Great Wall at Simatai (by Zhai Dongfeng)
5. A decorative screen-wall found at Simatai, on which unicorns, considered as auspicious animals by ancient people, are carved. Why the screen wall was built here remains a mystery. (by Zhai Dongfeng)
6. Xishuiyu Great Wall in Huairou County, five kilometres west of Yellow Flower City (by Zhai Dongfeng)



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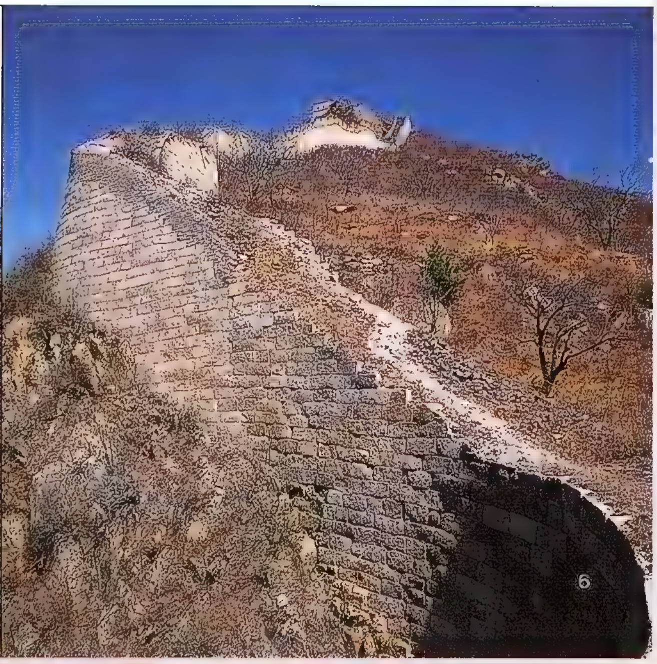

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A Wildlife Park: MIXING PEOPLE AND ANIMALS

Photos & article by Zhai Dongfeng

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As we entered Qinhuangdao Wild Animal Zoo and walked along a winding flagstone path among green trees, those first came into sight were the rare wild animals of the tropical regions such as the Asian elephant, Chinese alligator, golden-hair monkey and orang-utan. Since they are rare species on the verge of extinction, they are raised in pens. But still, visitors can, if they like, have their photos taken together with the elephant couple Papo and Maji, three metres high and weighing 4,000 kilograms. In the mornings or evenings, you would probably find the orang-utans wandering in the forest and the little orang-utan Doudou driving a small electric car along the road on his regular inspection tour. His carefree driving manner would make any visitor roar with laughter.

Leaving the tropical animal area, we took a tourist bus for the beast-of-prey area. The first beasts we saw were African lions — the "King" of all wild animals. The two male lions' harems were large, and less than 10 metres away from our bus one male was engaged in mating. A lioness walked to our bus and looked directly at us through the glass window from less than one metre away. She yawned, opening her mouth wide and exhaling, while we became silent inside the bus, awaiting with bated breath and wondering what would happen next. Fortunately, the tense stand-off only lasted less than 10 minutes before she left with a loud roar.

Scarcely past the manor of the lion was the den of the tiger. In the opening of a dense forest, 10 Northeast China tigers were raised. These tigers were neither like the spiritless ones found in cages nor like the fiercest wild ones. As the old saying goes, "Never can two tigers be found on one hill". The tiger lives a solitary life and so, here these 10 tigers seldom mixed. Some stayed near the road eyeing our bus, some walked to and fro in the woods, and others were crouched among grasses. A large tiger lying on the road obstructed our route, and it was only after our bus tooted several times that the tiger stood up and moved reluctantly to one side. But the action did not end there — this tiger lost its temper. Provoked by another bus moving back and forth tooting its horn, the tiger raised its paw and slapped the bus, leaving behind long scratch marks. The visitors in the bus, originally rocking with laughter, became quiet immediately and the bus left

1. People and deer mingle together closely.
2. Doudou is speeding along.

1

quickly. Along the route a sign states: "Getting out of bus in the beast-of-prey area is equal to committing suicide." The warning seemed quite true!

As soon as our bus entered the bear park, five brown bears immediately surrounded it to beg for food. If their demands were not satisfied, they would hold onto the window frame and not allow the bus to leave. The driver urged everyone to close the windows at once, but it was too late; several bears had already approached our bus and one had extended its paw through the open window. Fortunately, it did not scratch any people, only the white seating. At the same time a car behind us also appeared to be in danger. A huge bear reared up and threw its heavy body onto the front of the car. Luckily, the bear backed off fairly quickly, but we wondered what would have happened if the bear had broken the window glass?

Exiting the bear park, we definitely felt much more relaxed; we entered the herbivorous animal zone, which covers an area of 40 hectares. Here visitors can get off the bus and mix with a herd of deer. The deer were not at all shy, and some brave ones even dared to snatch the locust tree leaves from visitors' hands. In this part of the zoo there were many other harmless animals such as camels, gazelles, dwarf horses, big-eared sheep, and wild yaks.

Children automatically ran toward the animals of which they were most fond. Some held young deer, caressed their hair gently and talked to them; some vied with each another to tease camels and gazelles with tree leaves; and the parents were busy taking photos of their kids with animals. For a while people and animals played together and chased one another, forming a beautiful, yet unusual scene in the natural world.

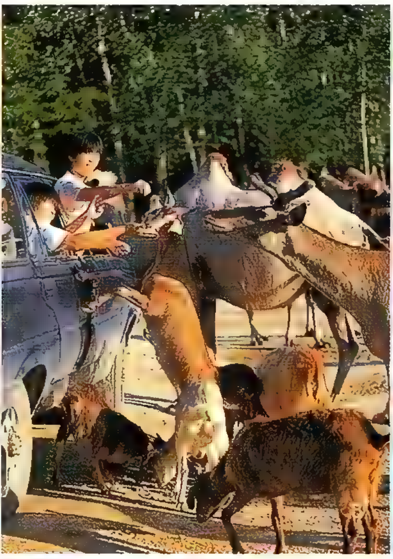
Then we came to a pond where we found various kinds of water birds: white swans were swimming in a proud and carefree style; red-crowned cranes were standing beside the pond; mandarin ducks were paddling in pairs; pelicans were resting by the shore; egrets were prancing through the water; and white storks were singing. In the woods, peacocks were displaying their fine tail feathers to visitors from time to time, while pheasants of different colours rushed about.

This wild animal zoo provides a rare and peaceful atmosphere for people to mingle with animals, and even to become friends with some. However, while sitting on the bus, as I gazed at the vigilant eyes of the lions and tigers not far away, I could not tell whether it was that we humans were enjoying the animals, or vice versa.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. **A unique singer**
2. **Running after the "invaders"**
3. **A world of harmony**
4. **Making friends**
5. **A display of beauty**
6. **"The King of the Mountain" in his own kingdom**

2



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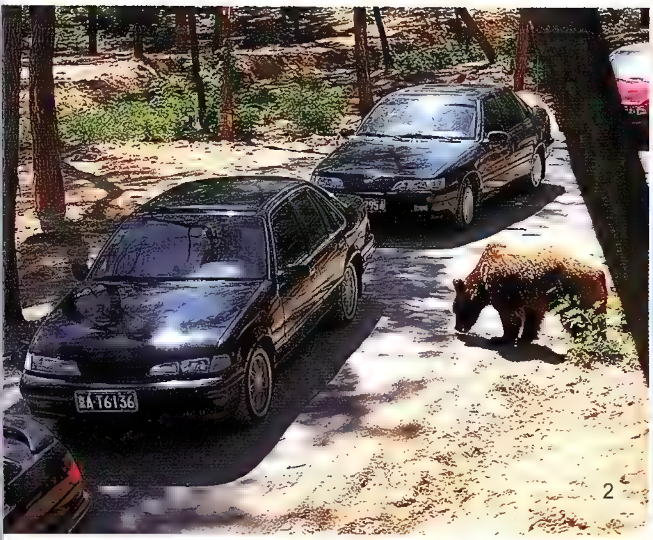


1. Just like a scholar deep in thought !
2. Passing through the beasts-of-prey area with windows and doors shut
3. A scene of the dolphin's show at the Marine World

Tips for the Traveller

Qinhuangdao City, about 300 kilometres northeast of Beijing, is a summer resort well-known both at home and abroad. Transport to the city is easy. More than 30 passenger trains go past Qinhuangdao, and nearby Beidaihe and Shanhaiguan stations every day. In summer time there is increased service from Beijing, Tianjin and Shenyang. There is air service between Shanhaiguan Airport and Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Dalian. Passenger ships enter Qinhuangdao Port from Dalian, Qingdao, Yantai and Shanghai. Buses and taxis are plentiful in the city.

To go to the Wild Animal Zoo, you can take bus Nos. 3 and 4 bound for Beidaihe Beach at the railway station square; fare is 3 yuan. Or hire a taxi; fare is 20 yuan. The Wild Animal Zoo is open from April 15 to early November every year; the rest of the year it is closed. The best season is from July to October. Entrance ticket is 40 yuan. Children less than one metre high are admitted free. Inside the zoo, buses are provided free of charge. Visitors using their own transport must pay an additional fee depending on the vehicle.

Accommodation: Visitors with heightened interest in animals can lodge in the Forest Hotel hidden deep inside the Qinhuangdao National Forest Park. It also has a vast beach close to a sea bathing spot, excellent for those who like to watch the tides and sunrises. There are three classes of rooms; a standard room is 300 yuan a night.

Food: Tourists can also have a taste of wild game at the Forest Restaurant, located beside Qinglu Lake inside the zoo. A meal of real delicacies from the land and sea costs only about 100 yuan. Tourists can rest assured that the wild game served here are not the protected animals but are surplus raised for food.

Recreation: The Car Club, which covers an area of 100,000 square metres and has a standard racecourse of 1,680 metres, is the main recreational facility inside the zoo. Organised car races using the 40 imported Italian cars, which can go up to 80 kilometres per hour, are open to all, with or without driving licences.

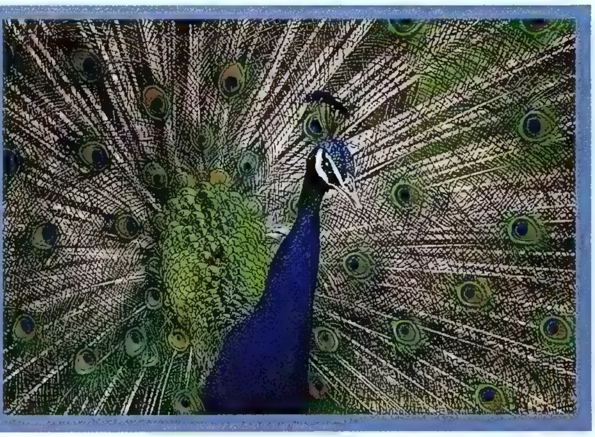
Performances: In the Marine World tourists can watch dolphin and sea lion performances. Besides, in the large Animal Theatre, they can enjoy the excellent performances jointly organised by the Russian Circus Troupe and the Animal Performing Troupe of the Qinhuangdao Wild Animal Zoo, including the tiger riding a horse, people riding tigers, tiger drawing a cart, lions on a slide, monkeys' car race, horsemanship, ostrich dance, taming of pythons, taming of goats, acrobatics and magic.

Ticket to the Marine World: 20 yuan
Ticket to the Animal Theatre: 20 yuan

Photography: Photography at the Wild Animal Zoo is very popular, but you need to come well-prepared. In certain areas you cannot get off the bus and need to rely on a zoom lens. Around the animals you can mingle with, it is ideal to have someone else feed the animal while you take the photo. But do not feed the animals with your own food; well-compacted forage food is on sale at the gate of the zoo at a fee of 1-5 yuan. Visitors wanting increased excitement can buy a live chicken in the beasts-of-prey zone and throw it to the bear, but you must be very quick to catch the result on film. In the dense forest the light is rather dim, so a wide-lens camera, high sensitivity film and tripod are needed.

Some of the Forest Restaurant's wild game dishes

1 Golden [illegible] mouths/36 yuan
2 Beer-stewed wild goose/56 yuan
3 Guinea fowl cooked in bamboo tube/ 40 yuan
4 Flavoured deer meat/45 yuan
5 Dove steamed in lotus leaves/35 yuan per dove
6 Guinea fowl stew/40 yuan
7 Locusts fried with red oil/30 yuan
8 Snake meat cooked in three different ways (current price)



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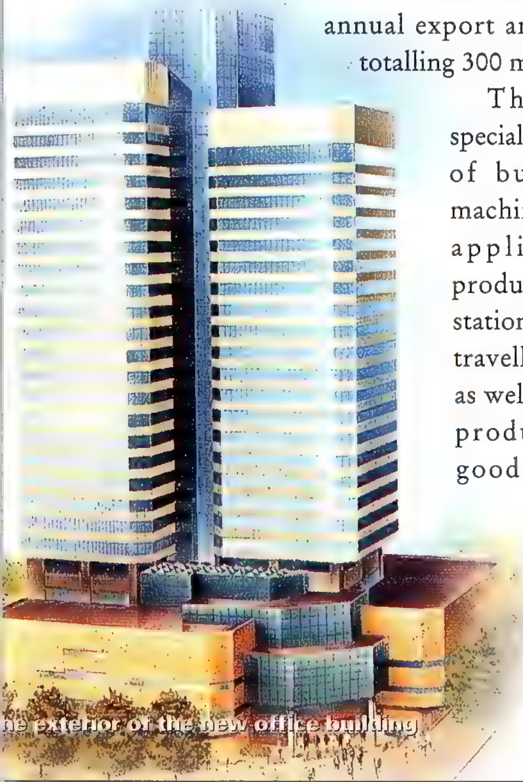
Jiangsu Light Industrial Products Import & Export (Group) Corporation, formerly China Light Industrial Products Import & Export Corporation, Jiangsu Branch, established in January, 1974, deals with and acts as the agent for the import and export business of light industrial products and other lines of goods licensed by the state. The company is also engaged in other trading activities such as joint-venture, joint manufacturing, compensation trade, entrepot trade, barter, after-sale services, personnel training, shipping and storage, and computer development, as well as running department stores, hotels, restaurants and recreation centres.

Because of the reform and opening up policy of the country, its favourable location at the resourceful Yangtse River Delta, and the possession of more than 300 qualified and experienced staff, the company has developed into one of the major and most efficient import and export corporations in China in 20 years, with a capital of more than one billion yuan and the annual export and import volume totalling 300 million US Dollars.


he exterior of the new office building

The corporation specialises in six main lines of business, namely machinery and electrical appliances, leather products, sundry goods, stationery and sports and travelling products, toys as well as footwear; these produce a variety of goods like hardward, watches and clocks, electrical appliances, leather accessories, suitcases and bags, Christmas decorations, gifts, soft toys and all kinds of shoes. Besides, it is equipped with five functional departments: New Products Development, Import Trade, General Manager Affairs Office, Planning and Accounting, and Enterprise Management.

The company has invested 200 million yuan in setting up a comprehensive industrial development base by the national highway in Baohua District. It has also opened nine subordinate companies in Shanghai, Suzhou, Wuxi, Changzhou and other cities, and owns 25 shareholding enterprises and 60 enterprises jointly operated by the corporation and factories.

The annual export value of footwear reaches 50 million US Dollars

Travelling products are welcomed by buyers all over the world

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LOOKING FOR THE 'BLEEDING RIVER'

Photos & article by Zhao Cheng'an

Red Water River: My First Attempt

My first visit to Hongshuihe or Red Water River, in the vast land of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region a few years ago, was disappointing. Years before, I had read a magazine article about the river and, although the photographs accompanying the article were not up to professional standards, the natural wonders depicted immediately caught my attention, and prompted me to attempt a visit to the area.

From the report I determined the river was in Wuqia County in the south of the region. From the map I found the county to be more than 2,000 kilometres away in a great mountain range. It appeared to be practically inaccessible.

In July 1989, I eventually made the trip to southern Xinjiang by car, skirting the vast borders of the Taklimakan Desert, all the while photographing the natural features of the desert and historic sites on the famous Silk Road.

After 20 days of travel, I arrived in Kaxgar (Kashi), the city which had been razed to the ground by a massive earthquake the previous year and was now being reconstructed. Shortly I proceeded to Wuqia County, over 100 kilometres away, along with a guide provided by the county's government office.

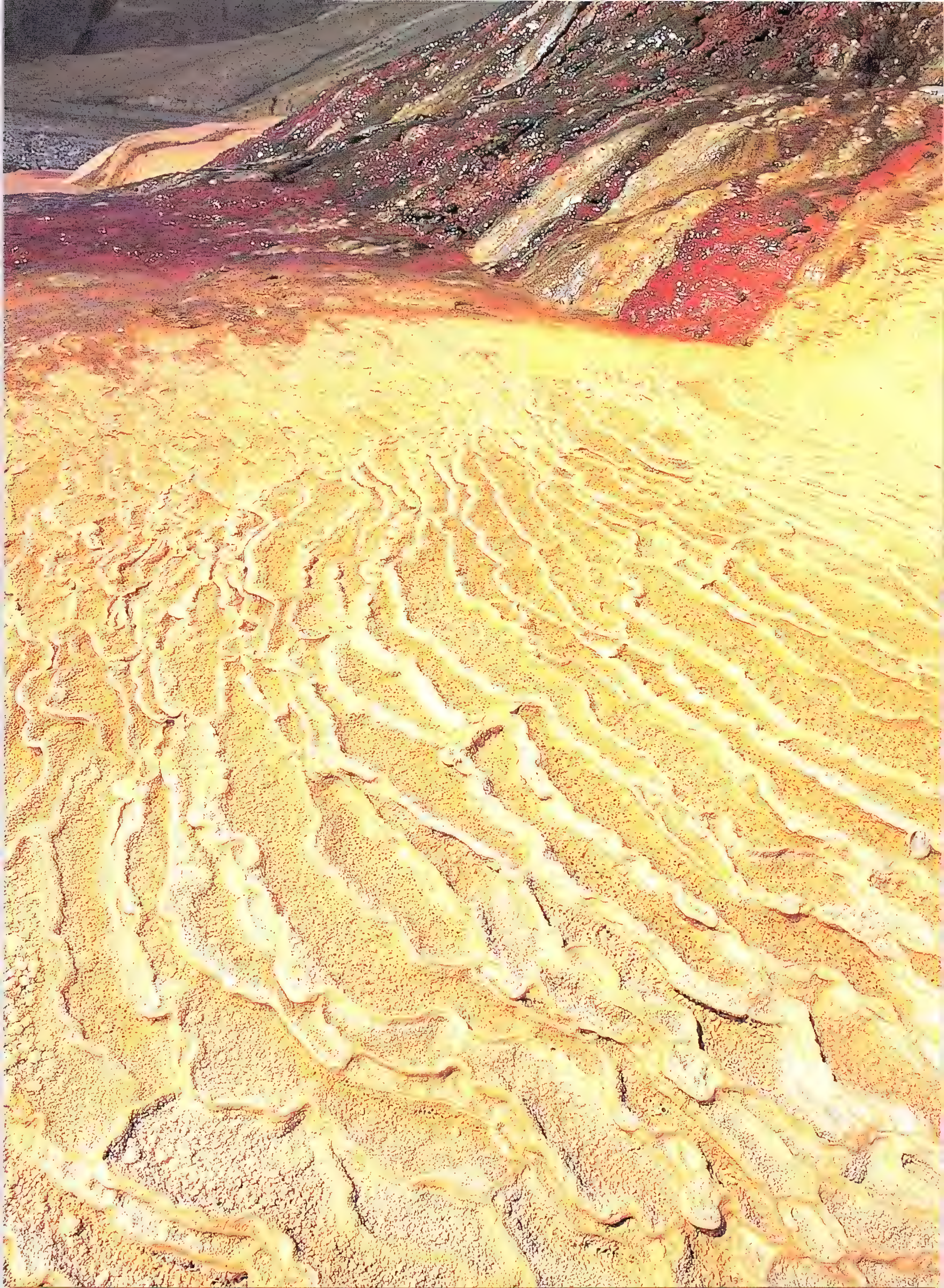
By the afternoon we had reached a bridge crossing a river. The guide said that from this point on we had to go up the river on foot. More than an hour passed and the Red Water River was nowhere to be seen, although the guide asserted we were nearly there. Then came the great disappointment — all the landmarks he pointed out had actually been formed by flood waters. I concluded that he had probably mistaken the Red Water River for the "Flood Water River". Although I again explained the details of the magazine pictures, the guide insisted this was the place and that the differences were due to the season. It was then I wondered if the river had disappeared with seasonal change.

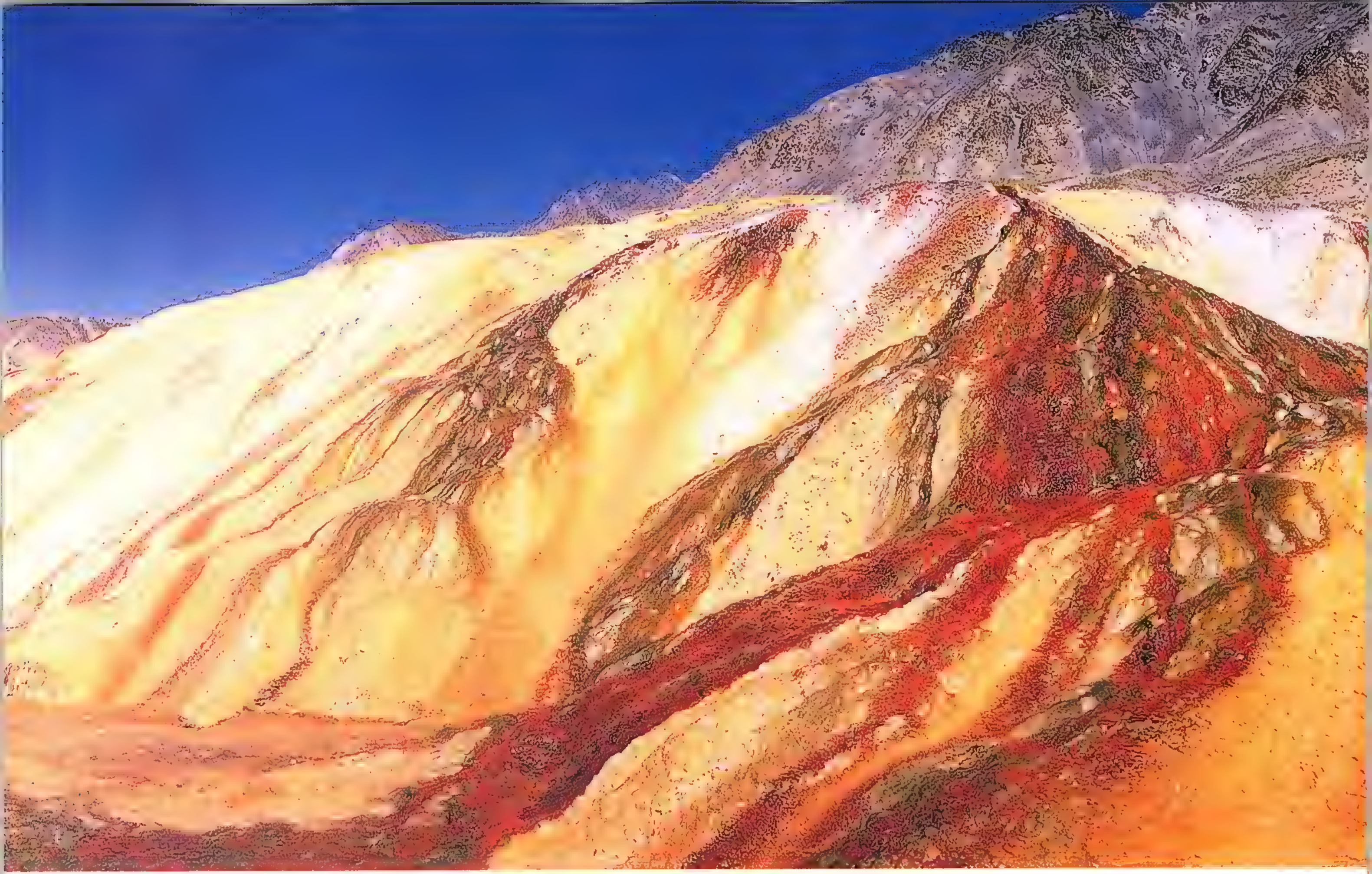
My First Sight of the 'Bleeding River'

In 1992, again I went to Wuqia County, but this time took along the magazine pictures of the river. Mr. He, the office director of the county government, was my host. I told him of the disappointment of my previous trip and my present hopes. However, the pictures were not familiar to him and he doubted the river's existence in his county. But on seeing my anxiety, he agreed to consult some of the local elders, and this produced the answer. A man about 70 years old said the river was at Tuoyun Mountain. He said the locals did not call it the Red Water River, but the Mare's Milk River or Koumis River due to its milky white water. Mr. He wrote a letter of introduction in the local Uygur language and sent me to the head of the township.

Our vehicle struggled along a bumpy, primitive mountain road till noon when we arrived at the township government offices. We drove on in the afternoon and stayed at a local herdsman's home for the night, and the next morning with the township's young deputy, we continued to our destination on foot.

1. **Exposed red rock around this gushing spring resembles a roaring furnace.**
2. **Terraces of orange calcified deposits extending down the mountain slope**





When I finally stood in front of this wonder of nature, I realised that the pictures had not prepared me for the sight — I was awe-struck. The whole river appeared to be a huge surgical incision across the mighty Earth's abdomen, laying bare its red innards, and its bleeding "muscles" and "internal organs". Accordingly, I nicknamed it "Bleeding River".

The river had gradually evolved into its current shape as the water carried and deposited various minerals in different places; those areas containing iron were bright red, those with copper were a greenish hue, while those with limestone appeared milky white. Apart from these minerals, other elements such as manganese and mercury oxide made the place dazzle with a multitude of colours. This geological phenomenon in Xinjiang is the same as that witnessed at the colourful lakes at Huanglong, Sichuan Province, and in the Yellowstone National Park in the United States.

2

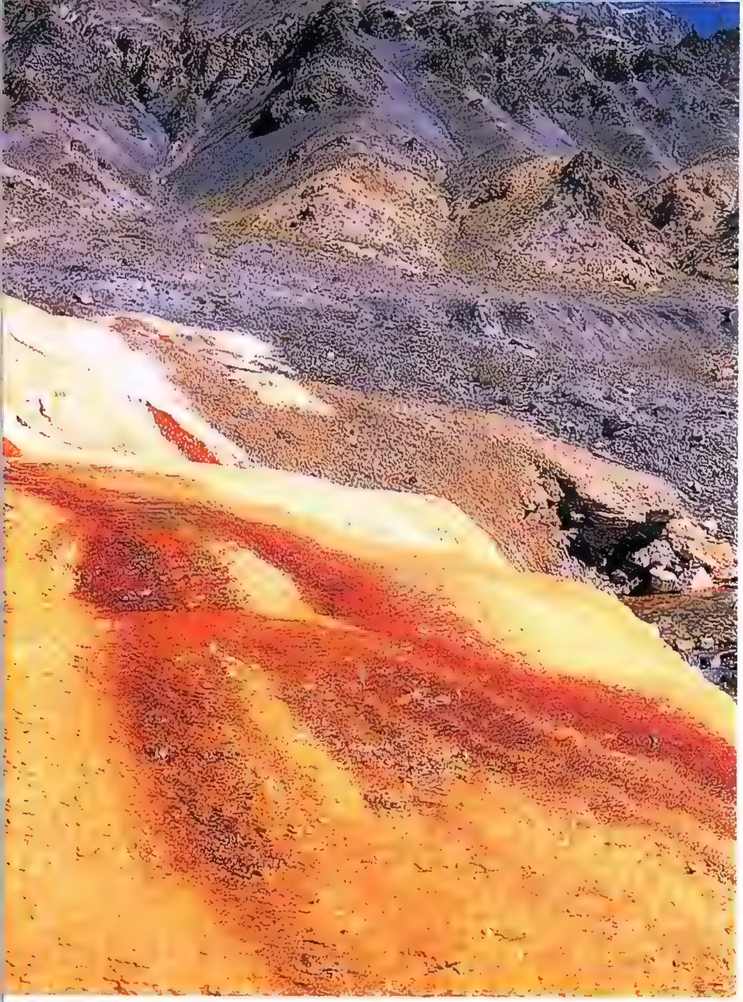
A Winter View of the River

Since my first visit had left me with unforgettable memories, sometime later I decided to try a winter visit as well. My imagination of spring waters gushing out from under great ice crystallisation, forming magnificent frozen images was what spurred me on. The trip was much more difficult due to the chilly weather and the extremely thin air at the high altitude. With the engine overheating on the continuous uphill drive, I finally reached the herdsman's home of my previous visit at 2 a.m.

The many hardships of the trip gave way to intense disappointment at the sight which greeted me at the river. All the places which previously afforded picturesque photos were now firmly covered with thick snow. The springs were all frozen except a few larger ones breaking out through a layer of ice. A few places resembled beehives. There were not many memorable pictures taken here.

Another Fruitful Visit

More than a year later, in July 1996, I bought a powerful, German-made Land Rover to take me, with ease, on another visit to the



Bleeding River. I was anxious to see what I had missed before.

With such ideal transport, the trip was much more restful, and I was able to investigate the whole area thoroughly. It was scarcely believable — the scenery had changed hardly at all. It looked virtually as I had seen it three years ago, which is as it should be, since in the history of nature three years is an infinitesimal short span of time.

Notwithstanding my four visits to this river, and despite the hardships of the trip, the natural wonders of this fascinating area would still entice me to return yet again.

1. **A bird's-eye view of the "Bleeding River" at the foot of Tuoyun Mountain**
2. **The rich and dazzling colours exposed by the "Bleeding River"**
3. **The "Bleeding River" appears as a gigantic surgical incision on the Earth's abdomen.**

Tips for the Traveller

Travel Pass: A pass is required to travel in this border area.

Transport: No public transport is available. From Kaxgar, the usual starting point, you may hire a jeep or a Land Rover, which costs about 2,000 yuan a day. To obtain memorable photographs of these places, it will be necessary to trek about two hours.

Accommodation: There are no hotels, but travellers can stay at local herdsman's homes.

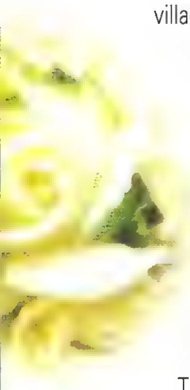
The Blossoming Dounan Village

Coming to Dounan Village is like visiting the "kingdom of flowers". Every family here grows flowers, and everybody's life is linked with flowers. Flowers are the theme of life. [illegible] flowers.

As the dawn is breaking, Dounan Village begins to stir with activity. Wooden doors reinforced with iron sheets clang open and people start to pour out, carrying bunches of flowers in their arms, on their shoulders, at either end of a carrying-pole, on bicycles, in trucks and on three-wheeled motorcycles, heading for the flower market.

Earning a Livelihood from Flowers

Dounan Village is an administrative unit at the grassroots level on the shore of Lake Dianchi, 20 kilometres to the southeast of the city of Kunming. Favoured by a mild climate, an eternal spring in all four seasons of the year, smooth terrain and fertile soil, and irrigated by the water-conservancy works of the broad Lake Dianchi, the whole village is like a large hothouse for growing flowers. There are 1,430 families in the village, all of them flower-growers. Each of the 5,176 people in the village, men and women, old and young, has been apportioned a share of 1/30 hectare of land. Almost all of them grow flowers on it. The neatly arranged red-brick, reinforced-concrete storeyed houses of the village are surrounded by white-plastic sheds for growing flowers. Flowers of all colours even grow along the small ditches between the plastic sheds and the paths leading to them. The whole village earns their livelihood from flowers.



The villagers used to be vegetable growers and had for generations dealt with manure and vegetables. Within 10 years, they have transformed their village into a garden of flowers. How did they do it?

The Pioneer Who Quit Suddenly

Speaking about growing flowers, every Dounan villager will remember a man named Hua Zhongyu who liked to grow flowers as a hobby. At the height of the reform and opening up to the outside world in the late 1980s, he suddenly hit upon an idea and became, not without risks, the first flower grower in the village by rigging up a simple shed. Later, when some other villagers followed suit and started to grow flowers for sale, the nearly 60-year-old Hua Zhongyu was scared.

Previous page, right: Dounan Village on the shore of Lake Dianchi
Upper right: It is so romantic sending flowers to the one you love.

[illegible] Hong Kong people [illegible]
[illegible] lilies and [illegible]
on [illegible]
Other varieties of flowers are placed in bouquets.
A single [illegible] than these [illegible]
[illegible] in 2002 [illegible]

With so many people growing flowers, whom am I to sell my flowers to? He decided to quit and thus became one of the first few villagers who started the flower business but did not make money out of it.

The Whole Village Pitched In

Even though people like Hua Zhongyu have pulled out, all the other villagers in Dounan continue to grow flowers. They work in the flower sheds in the morning, watering, fertilising and spraying insecticides, cut the flowers in the afternoon and tidy up, tie them into bunches and pack them at home in the evening. The flowers are soaked in water and taken to the market early the following morning. Every afternoon and evening, the courtyard and main room of every household in the village become a fresh-flower processing workshop.

The Shu family is an average flower-grower family who grow and market the flowers themselves. Shu Yong, the 22-year-old son of Shu Jianming, the head of the family, has stayed in Guangzhou for half a year. He studies the market situation there and calls home by long-distance telephone every evening to tell his family what is needed there. His family will prepare the correct varieties and quantities of flowers that evening and have them dispatched the following morning by air-freight agencies in Dounan Village. The flowers will be immediately taken to the flower market in Guangzhou and be placed in the vases of customers on the same day.

There are more than 200 agents like Shu Yong from Dounan Village who are permanently stationed in Guangzhou. There are also agents from Dounan Village in most of the other economically well-developed areas in the country. The flowers handled by these agents, however, are not as large in quantity as those stationed in Guangzhou. This means that there are 300 to 400 people from Dounan Village who are selling flowers from their village in several dozen cities, and that flowers from Dounan Village are blossoming all over the country. Some people have even gone to Southeast Asian countries to sell flowers from Dounan.

36273
DAJIANG

1. **Flower sellers work against time to deliver freshly cut flowers to the Flower Street in Kunming.**
2. **Shangyi Street in Kunming has become a flower street following the success of the flower market in Dounan Village.**
3. **Residents in Kunming adorn their rooms with fresh flowers.**
4. **The former vegetable gardeners have become prosperous flower growers with business connections all over the country.**
5. **Flowers have to be carefully trimmed before going to the market.**
6. **The flower market at Dounan Village thronging with people and flowers**

[illegible]

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6

In addition to the several hundred people who are stationed in distant places to sell flowers from Dounan, there are also 100 to 200 flower dealers who are stationed in Dounan Village to buy flowers for their flower shops in various other places. Young Ye from Guangdong is known to everybody in the village. He goes to the village's flower market every morning, and usually buys and dispatches more than 10,000-yuan worth of flowers a day and even flowers worth tens of thousands of yuan on festival days and holidays. Young Ye likes the climate in Kunming very much, and enjoys his work in Dounan.

Dazzling Flower Stories

The flower market in Dounan Village indeed presents a dazzling sight. Flowers sold in large quantities are placed in separate sections at the market. The most expensive flower sold here is the fragrant lily. A single good spray can fetch more than 10 yuan. The least expensive ones are the Hong Kong pavetta, forget-me-not and yarrow, which are sold for a few yuan a kilogram. Carnations and roses are the best selling flowers.

Fresh flowers have gradually become an indispensable part of Kunming residents' lives. A nurse named Shang Yanyu working at the Convalescent Hospital of Kunming has had flowers sent to her husband on every Valentine's Day for three years with an "anonymous" tag. Even today, her husband still does not know where the flowers came from. Her husband's colleagues say it must be a secret admirer, and he does not dare tell his wife that someone has sent him flowers. He is happy even though he does not know who the sender is.

A man named Xu Wenjun is deeply in love with his wife. He has been buying flowers for his wife on Valentine's Day for three years. This year, he came to the flower market with his child and spent 100 yuan on a basket of lilies and tulips.

The 69-year-old man named Dai from Taipei is running a factory in Kunming. Through a matrimonial agency, he came to know Li, a 55-year-old woman and a native of Kunming, who had been divorced for 10 years. Dai liked Li at first sight. The second time they met happened to be Valentine's Day. Dai bought Li three roses, which, he said, stood for the three words: "I love you."

Flowers are a Liaison with the World

Fresh flowers play a key role on every Valentine's Day. There are flowers in every street in Kunming, at the flower market in Shangyi Street and in every park, hotel and amusement centre. The flower shops on Guofang Street offer many kinds of customer services.

The World Gardening Expo to be held in Kunming in 1999 will display the flowers from Dounan Village which have added a "romantic" touch to the lives of so many people.

1. It is no longer a strange sight to see a man carrying a bunch of flowers on the street.
2. Shang Yanyu sending flowers to her husband anonymously
3. Flowers require more intensive cultivation than vegetables.
4. A flower-growing family and their hired workers.
5. Plastic sheds for growing flowers cover thousands of hectares on the shore of Lake Dianchi.

Tips for the Traveller

Transportation: Bus No. 12 goes from the general bus terminal at Juhuacun, the Eastern Railway Station of Kunming, to the entrance to Dounan Village. Ticket price: 1.50 yuan. A three-wheeled motorcycle or a van will take you into the village for 1 yuan.

Board and Lodging: There are a restaurant and several eating places in the village. An overnight stay in the Chenggong Hotel, two kilometres from the village, costs 50-180 yuan for a standard room. The village has a simple hostel, which costs 15 yuan per person.

Kunming World Gardening Expo '99

Compiled by Xiaobai

Enjoying a pleasant climate like spring all year round, Kunming abounds with flowers and is designated the "city of flowers". From May 1 to October 31, 1999, the "Kunming World Gardening Expo '99" will be held, brightening up this "city of flowers".

"Man and Nature — Marching into the 21st Century" is the theme of the Kunming World Gardening Expo '99. The venue of the Expo is found near the Jindian Scenic Area, seven kilometres from the city, covering an area of 205 hectares. The venue is divided into different sections: five indoor exhibition halls, totalling to 42,000 square metres, six exhibition gardens covering 57,300 square metres, and the 116,000-square-metre outdoor exhibition area.

1. Indoor Exhibition Halls

China Hall: The style and design here will imitate modern dwellings in China, with the theme "Fascinating Chinese Gardening", emphasising the long history and extensive culture of gardening in China.

Great Greenhouse: Inside this glass house, visitors will find themselves surrounded by tropical rain forests, alpine vegetation and colourful temperate gardens.

Man and Nature Hall: This hall will present the relationship between man and gardening, and enhances people's awareness of environmental protection.

Technology Hall: This hall's theme, "Gardening and Technology", will present the advanced technology applied in gardening and its achievements both inside and outside the country.

International Hall: This hall will exhibit precious and rare species of gardening plants and the achievements of gardening developments of different countries and regions.

2. Exhibition Gardens

Tree Garden: Here, visitors will find various precious species of trees ideal for Kunming's outdoor climate.

Tea Garden: Multiple kinds of tea trees will be displayed and tea leaf production skills demonstrated, reflecting the culture and history of sampling Chinese tea.

Bamboo Garden: Visitors can admire the natural beauty of diverse species of bamboo planted along the waterside.

Potted Plant Garden: The styles of different schools and the splendid art of Chinese potted plants will be introduced here.

Medicinal Herb Garden: Medicinal herbs with traditional uses as well as those worthy of admiration will be exhibited, reflecting the profound culture of Chinese medicine.

Vegetable and Fruit Garden: A fine array of assorted vegetables and fruits which can satisfy both the eyes and the palate will be shown.

3. Outdoor Exhibition Zones

Local Zone: Displayed here will be the representative natural and artificial landscapes, as well as the advancements of gardening technology of each province, city and region in China.

International Zone: This is where exhibitors of different countries, regions and international organisations will show the fruits of their hard work.

Enterprises Zone: This zone will display the assets of the developing gardening industry and to reflect recent efforts in environmental protection.

There will also be other scenic attractions in the vast venue — squares, sculptures, fountains, a flower boat — and many other facilities such as a reception centre with rooms, restaurants, banquet halls, fast-food shops, a shopping area and an amusement centre for children.

Translated by Jess Tang

1. The model of the Technology Hall (Courtesy of the Organising Committee of the Kunming World Gardening Expo '99)
2. Flowers covering every corner of Kunming (by Li Zhixiong)
3. The plan of the Kunming World Gardening Expo '99 (Courtesy of the Organising Committee of the Kunming World Gardening Expo '99)

Mandarin Duck Rotatable Pot

– A Rare Piece Among Wine Vessels

Photos by Wang Yaojin • Article by Song Quanzhong

Chinese people set a great store by wine, and when they manufacture wine pots, they pay a lot of attention to the variety, shape and decorative pattern, always adopting an original approach. During my visit to Suixian County in Henan Province, I saw a uniquely made wine pot called the Mandarin Duck Rotatable Pot, a rare treasure among wine vessels.

Exquisitely made the pot is simple and elegant. In round or flat shape, it has a variety of colours and is decorated with an auspicious pattern of dragon, phoenix or Chinese characters "Longevity". At first glance I could not tell the difference between the wine pots. But after hearing the detailed introduction by the designer, I came to understand that this was no ordinary utensil. The intrigue of the wine pot lies in the fact that from one such pot you can pour out two different kinds of wine respectively through the same spout and they will not get mixed.

A flat-shape rotatable wine pot in primitive simplicity

With the rotatable wine pot it is possible to pour out either wine without mixing.

There are records on this kind of pot used as a wine vessel in the imperial court, most of them connected with murder. The host would place poisonous wine and non-poisonous wine into the same pot and turn round freely without mixing the two different kinds of wine thus ridding themselves of their enemies. According to Tang Benmao, the designer, the pot was invented by one of his ancestors. In the early Western Han Dynasty about 2,000 years ago, the Tang Family who were engaged in ceramics generation after generation produced a most intelligent kilnman, who was nicknamed "Know-all". He got into debt and was forced to create a rotatable pot for a creditor. The creditor who wanted to have an official post sent the pot as a present to Lü Zhi, wife of Emperor Gaozu, Liu Bang. Lü Zhi wanted to be the only owner of such a pot and issued an order to assassinate the pot maker.

Several hundred years later after the art of the pot was lost, Tang Benmao, based on the records in historical books and folklore, finally succeeded in restoring the manufacture of the pot after 10 years efforts. Tang Benmao demonstrated the function of the pot with two different colours of wine. Apart from the spout, the pot has four holes, one on the top and one at the bottom for putting in wine. When wine is poured into the pot, the two holes are clogged up with rubber corks. The other two holes on either side of the pot body are used for ventilation, the secret of the pot. Tang Benmao grasped hold of the pot with the index finger, the third finger and the little finger of his right hand, while stretching out the thumb and middle finger to block the two air vents on either side of the pot. Then he tilted the pot, turned it clockwise and at the same time moved the middle finger away from the hole. The wine of one colour came out from the spout. When he turned the pot in the reversed direction and moved away the thumb, the wine of another colour came out. A careful examination of the colours and a taste of the two kinds of wine found they did not get the slightest mixed.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

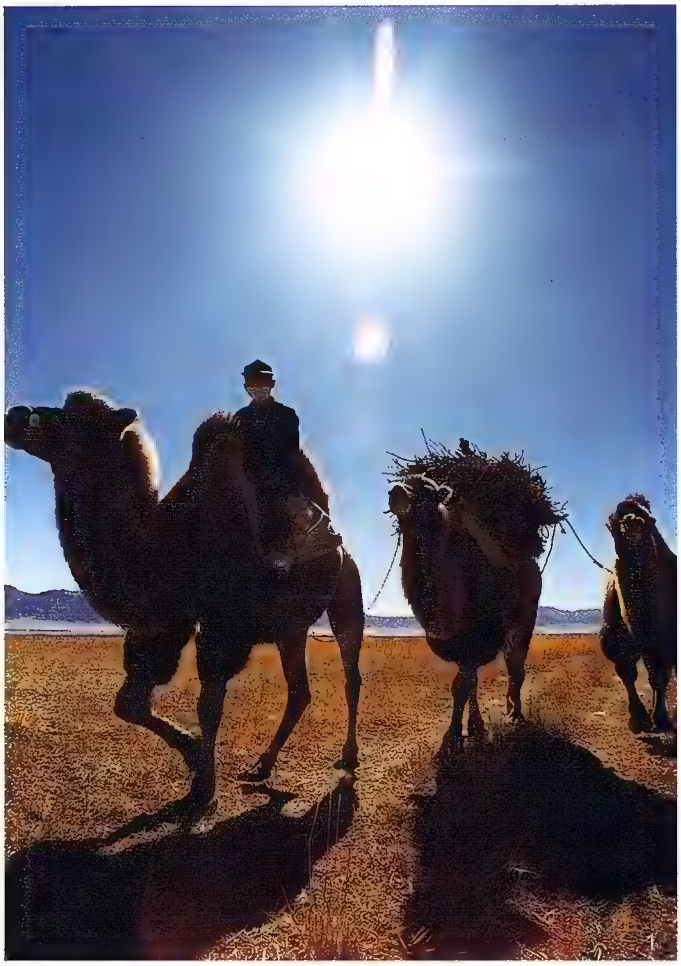
No one can tell the secret from the appearance of this exquisitely made wine pot.

This Mandarin Duck Rotatable Pot of imitation bronze has antique patterns on it.

AKSAY

Home of the Kazaks

Photos & article by Li Kesheng



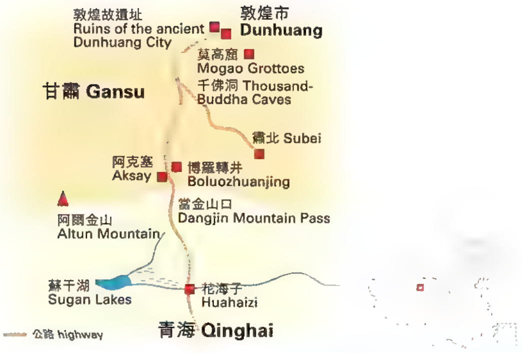
Aksay Kazak Autonomous County, about one hundred kilometres southwest of Dunhuang, in Gansu Province, has long been known as "the golden boundary stone of Gansu, Qinghai and Xinjiang provinces". Located in a region between the western part of the Qilian and Altun Mountain Ranges, it is an autonomous county of the ethnic people with the smallest population in China. Inside the county there are undulating peaks, deep valleys, vast grasslands and deserts, where the Kazak people have lived generation after generation. The beautiful Sugan Lakes inside the county are known as "The Sea of Flowers". Flowers are blooming everywhere around these delightful grassland lakes in summer, creating the most attractive scenery of all the four seasons of the year.

The Golden Desert Sea

There is a long distance bus starting from Dunhuang for Aksay everyday. The bus we took started off at eight in the morning. Before it went far, "the ancient Dunhuang city" — the set of ancient buildings built for the film "Dunhuang" directed by the Japanese director Junya Sato — appeared close by the road on our left. This ancient city showed the original features of Shazhou (the name of Dunhuang in ancient times) in the reign of Li Yuanhao, king of the Western Xia Dynasty (1038-1227). The sight of it caused many flashes of thought to cross my mind. As the bus ran farther on, a boundless desert came into view. Looking at the vast sea of sand, we suddenly felt that we human beings were so insignificant in the midst of the greatness of Nature.

Yellow sand lay in beautiful curves, undulating in the shape of a bending belt, and the sand dunes were separated into countless abstract shapes. Some sand dunes not far away resembled the beautiful bodies of women, while those in the far distance were like a golden sea of magnificent rolling waves. Once the bus ran out of the vast sheet of desert, Boluozhuanjing Town, the seat of Aksay County, could be seen.

1. The camels' work for the day is done.
2. Entertaining the guests with local folk music
3. A carefree life on the grassland



The Origin of Aksay

When we arrived in Aksay, we found few visitors there. Our enquiry revealed that we were still more than 80 kilometres from the Sugan Lakes and there was no regular bus going there. We were at a complete loss what to do. In desperation I suddenly remembered a personal card a friend had given me, and we soon found Mr. Ma Haiqing, director of the Aksay Science Commission, from the address on the card.

Mr. Ma had come to Aksay in the 1950s when the county was first established. He was a real old Aksay hand who knew the history, folk customs and religion of the area. That evening he told us the history of Aksay and its name.

Aksay is the name of a valley on the northern side of the Altun Mountains. In this deep valley there are crystal-like glaciers, white snow and fast-running streams. It is a world of white colour. The mountain slopes are overgrown with luxuriant grass, making it one of the favoured pasture-lands of the local people. According to the language of the Kazaks, "Ak" means "white" and "say", "valley"; since the Kazak people are fond of the colour white, they named the county after this white valley.

Through Dangjin Mountain to Sugan Lakes

Early the next morning we got into the cross-country vehicle sent over by Mr. Ma to continue our journey. The driver, Halu, was a humorous Kazak young man who gave us a running description of the scenery and geographical features along the way. Soon we reached the Dangjin Mountain Pass, the only passage between the Northwest regions of Gansu and Qinghai. Several restaurants stood by the road, and from time to time we saw some foreigners — international hunters — coming down from the nearby international hunting ground.

We did not stop at the pass, because we wanted to drive on to the Sugan Lakes and Haizi Grassland quickly. The plentiful grass and water found on the Haizi Grassland is the best among all grasslands in Aksay. The greater and lesser Sugan Lakes in the basin on the plateau look like two sapphires inlaid on the green grasslands. The Haizi Grassland was given its name because of these two Sugan lakes. (According to the Han people, "haizi" refers to the highland lake.)

At noon we arrived at the our destination, real saltwater highland lakes. The water in the Sugan Lakes was the azure blue of the sky. It was now early autumn, and the grassland was a typical autumn scene with everything tinged in gold and orange colours. At the lakeside, flocks of sheep and cattle were grazing in the soft breeze. Sentimental thoughts filled our minds while we were basking in the warm highland sunshine.

Warm Hospitable Hosts

Our driver Halu took us to a Kazak yurt. The round yurt looked small when viewed from the outside, but on entering, we found it very spacious — 20 square metres. Colourful Kazak tapestries hung on the four walls. With distinct national features, these tapestries were designed in fluid lines and bright colours, not only serving as beautiful decorations but also playing a key role in keeping the warmth inside. They were the art works of the female members of the family. The host of this well-to-do family had a wife, son and daughter. As we arrived, they were making their last minute preparations for the summer and autumn herding.

While our host made milk tea for us, Ta Yifu, a famous Kazak folk artist, started to pluck his stringed instrument to play some music for us. We drank fragrant milk tea, ate crisp fried cakes and listened to sweet music, completely immersed in the unique atmosphere of the grasslands. Staying together with the Kazaks we felt carefree and happy.

2

1. A young Kazak girl
2. Tasting typical Kazak food
3. The quiet Sugan Lakes

The Kazaks have a traditional custom that when a distinguished guest comes, the family will slaughter a sheep with yellowish hair. This is the highest courtesy a guest may be accorded. At the time the sheep is slaughtered, an Islamic ceremony must be held.

A Night in a Yurt

Travelling on the grasslands, one could forget the passage of time, because one is so drawn by the countless beautiful scenes everywhere. We were lost in time and completely unaware that dusk had fallen, so our hospitable host came to bring us back to the yurt. A sumptuous supper containing "Hand-Grasping Mutton" had been already prepared. This was our first time eating such fresh mutton on the grasslands. The mutton was in such big pieces that each one weighed about one kilogram. This shows how warm-hearted and generous towards their guests are these grassland people.

2

3

After supper in the evening both the hosts and guests sat together around a stove and talked candidly. We chatted about everything including the weather. The changeable weather in the region is typical of the plateau, just as the saying goes: "Wear a fur coat in the morning, change to light clothes at noon, and sit around a burning stove while eating watermelon." We also talked about tourism, in which we found the Kazaks had a keen interest. They asked us many questions about developing tourism around the Sugan Lakes. The Kazak people's dynamic thinking greatly surprised us. Later we learned that Aksay is "a famous overseas Chinese hometown in the Northwest gobi". The whole county has over 600 relatives of its natives living abroad.

That night our host offered us the best place in the yurt to sleep, for which we were very grateful. The warm yurt was the home of the herders and now became the resting place for visitors from afar. Gazing at the brilliance of the fire in the stove, we relaxed our fatigued four limbs and soon fell into sound sleep.

The Sunrise over the Sugan Lakes

At dawn the fire had died out, the temperature inside the yurt dropped, and we were awakened by the cold. Unable to sleep, we got up and went to watch the sun rising over the Sugan Lakes. The sunrise here was different from that on the sea. Nor was it the same as that over the famous mountains and rivers elsewhere in China. Although it was early September, it was very cold and damp in the morning. At last the sun rose, slowly, like a huge red ball of fire from the eastern horizon. Thus, the Sugan Lakes welcomed in a new day.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Tips for the Traveller:

Transport and accommodation: From Dunhuang to Aksay, public bus fare is 8 yuan. The conditions at the county guest house are fairly good and the rate is reasonable.

Climate and elevation: The temperature is 16.7 °C in the hottest month, July. Some thick clothes are needed. The average elevation is 3,200 metres.

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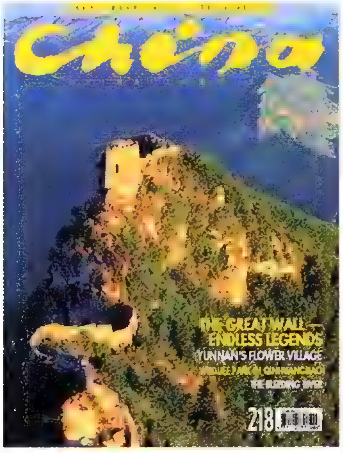

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next issue

Baiyangdian Lake

Xie Guanghui

Lop Nur — the 'Restricted Life Zone'

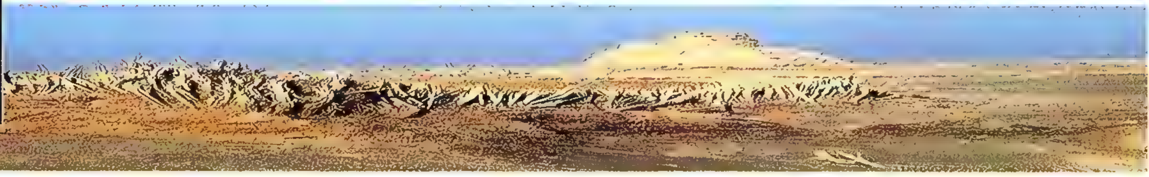
Liang Weixiong

Red River Region of Yunnan

Zhong Jintang

*In Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, **Lop Nur**, is designated as the "restricted life zone" and the "labyrinth without enclosure". Nevertheless, this vast expanse of desert, which is so hard to get to, has, from time to time, drawn many people to explore it, despite the hardships and danger. Two teams of modern explorers followed in the footsteps of Peng Jiamu, a scientist, and Yu Chunshun, a traveller, who were both devotees of this mysterious place.*

***Baiyangdian Lake**, 153 kilometres away from Beijing, is where you can experience the atmosphere of a South China waterside village in the North. The majority of the villagers there are fishermen. In this village with picturesque scenery, boats shuttle across the lake and ospreys hover in the air...*



*A Hong Kong restaurant owner with an interest in folk songs paid a visit to the **Red River region of Yunnan** together with friends, where they had a breathtaking car trip in a downpour, drank plentiful bowls of wine, and dropped into a Yao village where all the girls were bald...*

*And for a really thrilling experience — there is **rock climbing in Kunming**: the bluff is so precipitous and the strong wind whistles continuously... Up there, possession of superb climbing skills cannot guarantee one's safety.*

Rock Climbing in Kunming

Li Zhixiong

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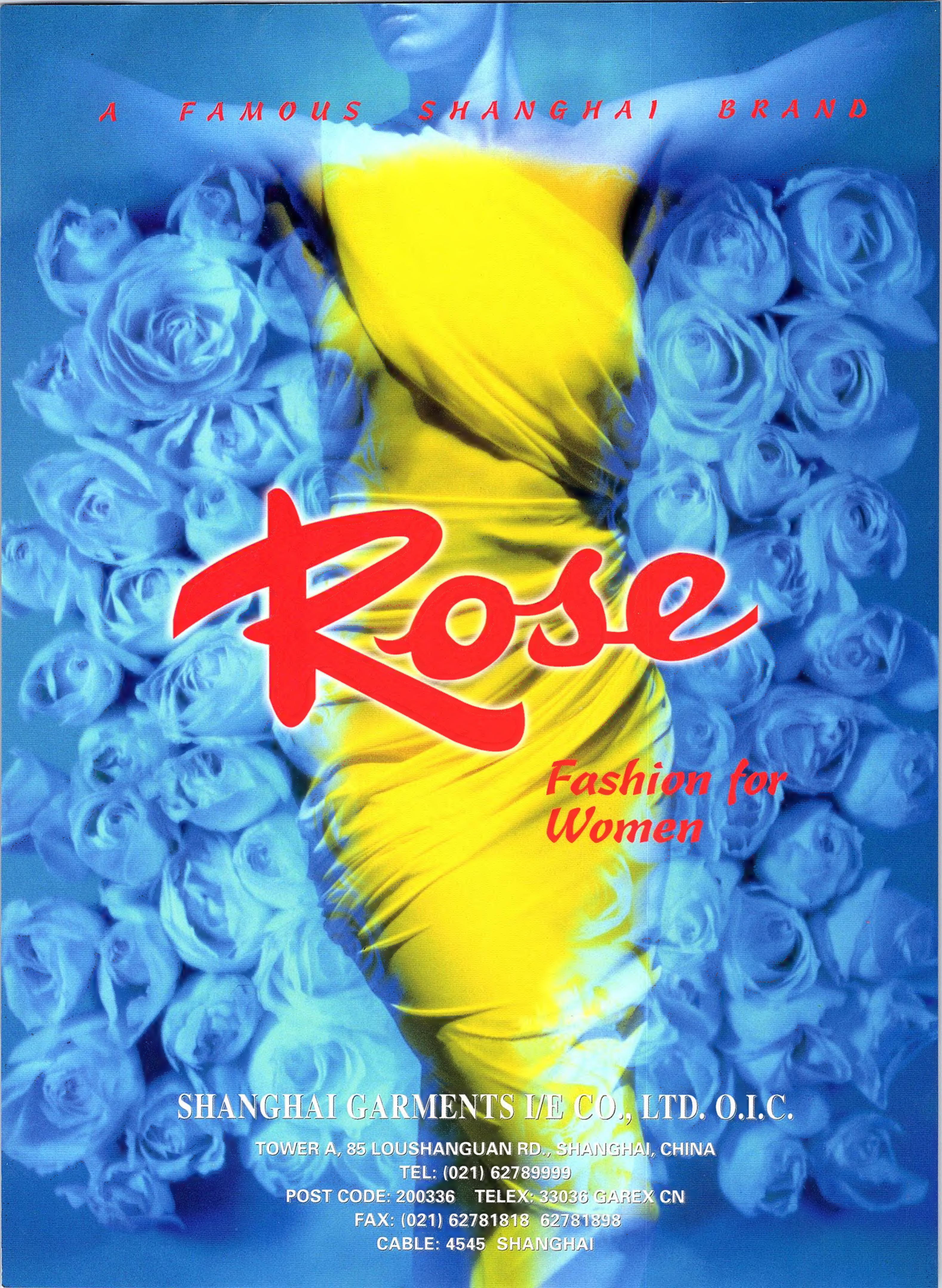

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